


THE VAULTS OF
EROWID



[About Erowid](#)
[Join / Donate](#)

[Plants & Drugs](#)
[Mind & Spirit](#)
[Freedom & Law](#)
[Culture & Art](#)
[Library](#)

Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)
[Against the drug war but not sure what to do about it?](#)
[Join Erowid and help us spread accurate, independent information.](#)

Proemium

Introduction

from *Pharmactheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spoke to them; and whether they did not think at the time that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd: "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in everything..."

William Blake
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793)

My senses discovered the infinite in everything one summer night in Pennsylvania a quarter century ago, and sometime later in Hawaii, as the lustral beams of moonlight danced over a tropical sea; then later still, high in the remotest mountains of Oaxaca, when mighty Tla'loc's lightning bolts raged in the heavens and crashed into Mother Earth in the valley far below; and in the towering Ecuadorian forests of Sacha Runa, to the soothing melody of a shaman's whistled *icaro*, and the dry rustling rhythm of his leafy fan. For I have been privileged to be initiated into the sacred realm of the entheogens, sacramental plant teachers of countless generations of the family of humankind; have been vouchsafed a fleeting glimpse behind Our Lady Gaia's veil; have imbibed the *amrita* of Indra, the *ambrosia* of the Olympian gods, Demeter's potion; have for brief blessed instants gazed into Lord Shiva's blazing third eye. Having been graced by these and other holy visions, my life has been transformed and enriched beyond measure.... I have become an initiate to the sacred Mysteries of antiquity, what the Greeks called an *epoptes*, one who has seen the holy.

This book is about these wondrous entheogens, these strange plant sacraments and their contained active principles. The term *entheogen* was first suggested by classical scholars Carl A.P. Ruck and Danny Staples, pioneering entheogen researcher R. Gordon Wasson, ethnobotanist Jeremy Bigwood and me. The neologism derives from an obsolete Greek word meaning "realizing the divine within," the term used by the ancient Greeks to describe states of poetic or prophetic inspiration, to describe the entheogenic state which can be induced by sacred plant-drugs. This term replaces the pejorative words *psychotomimetic* and *hallucinogenic*, with their connotations of psychosis and hallucination, and the orthographically incorrect *psychedelic* (the correct spelling being *psychodelic*, as the word is commonly rendered in languages other than English), which has become so invested with connotations of sixties' popular culture ("psychedelic" art, music, etc.) as to make it incongruous to speak of ancient shamanic use of a *psychedelic* plant. I have summarized the logic behind the use of *entheogen(ic)* in Chapter 1, Note 1, and the interested reader is referred to the original paper proposing the word (Ruck *et al.*; Wasson *et al.* 1980b).

My readers would be justified in asking "why yet another book on these drugs?" for over the years there have been many good books on the topic. I might mention in particular the excellent scientific book [The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens](#) by American ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes and Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, as well as their more popular, and more lavishly illustrated, *Plants of the Gods* (Schultes & Hofmann 1979; Schultes & Hofmann 1980). I will have occasion in the text following to refer to these and other valuable books on the subject. My goal in writing the present book was two-fold; first, to write a reference book for the specialist, citing the most important sources in the historical, anthropological, botanical, chemical and pharmacological literature, meanwhile placing this subject in the broader context of general ethnobotany. Thus I have updated and greatly enlarged the best existing bibliography on the subject, that of *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens*. The present bibliography is triple the size of that of Schultes and Hofmann, and even so, does not pretend to be exhaustive. My second goal in the writing of this book has been to detail the complex history of entheogenic drugs, and to trace in particular the story of how these drugs came to be available to non-traditional users in the twentieth century. In contrast to the authors of many other treatises on the subject, I consider the ethnobotany of entheogenic plants and their active agents in contemporary western culture to be every bit as important as their traditional ethnobotany, if not more so. As Gordon Wasson opined:

Perhaps with all our modern knowledge we do not need the divine mushrooms any more. Or do we need them more than ever? Some are shocked that the key even to religion might be reduced to a mere drug. On the other hand, the drug is as mysterious as it ever was... (Wasson 1961)

Only recently have some academic anthropologists begun to consider contemporary drug subcultures to be worthy of formal study (Adler 1985; Holden 1989a).

I will neither promote nor inveigh against contemporary non-traditional use of entheogenic drugs. True, some of the drugs discussed in this book are illegal, and there are those who think it irresponsible to discuss this subject without denouncing their illicit use. On the other hand, the bulk of the compounds studied in this book are legal, and there is no question that there are presently in the United States alone at least a million users of entheogenic drugs, legal and illegal (Goldstein & Kalant 1990), and it is to these *psychonauts* (Junger 1970), as well as to interested scientists, that this book is directed. There is no need to encourage would-be users to sample the entheogens- the drugs have their devotees, and in any case the current supply is probably insufficient to meet the demand of established users (Blanco 1993).

In this exordium, however, I will denounce *in no uncertain terms* the futile, counter-productive and ill-advised proscription of entheogenic drugs by the governments of the United States and other countries. As Baruch Spinoza so presciently put it:

All laws which can be violated without doing any one any injury are laughed at. Nay, so far are they from doing anything to control the desires and passions of men that, on the contrary, they direct and incite men's thoughts the more toward those very objects; for we always strive toward what is forbidden and desire the things we are not allowed to have. And men of leisure are never deficient in the ingenuity needed to enable them to outwit laws framed to regulate things which cannot be entirely forbidden... He who tries to determine everything by law will foment crime rather than lessen it.

It is self-evident that the millions of contemporary users of proscribed entheogenic drugs are laughing at the laws presuming to forbid them, and that they are far from deficient in the ingenuity needed to outwit those laws. It has ever been so with laws presuming to regulate the legitimate appetites of human beings; and there is no question that such laws represent an abuse of governmental power. As the great libertarian Edmund Atwill Wasson wrote in 1914, in a critique of the prohibition of alcohol in the United States (Wasson 1914):

It is one thing to furnish the law, and another to furnish the force needed to ensure obedience. That is why we have so many dead-letter laws in this country, --we forget that a law is not self-enforcing.

In theory, law is the instrument of popular will in democratic countries, and in practice has been used as a weapon by majorities to repress and harass minorities, especially laws against drugs which are associated with those groups (Helmer 1975; Musto 1973). The prohibition of alcohol in the United States is an exceptional case of laws fomented by a fanatical and active minority resulting in the harassment and repression of the majority (Musto 1973; Wasson 1914). When a law is sufficiently unpopular, as was the Constitutional amendment prohibiting alcohol manufacturing and sale for ludibund purposes in the United States, the people in theory will rise to overturn it. Would that it were so with unjust laws, or unenforceable laws! When a government proves itself all-too-willing to attempt to "furnish the force needed to ensure obedience" to unenforceable and (arguably) unjust laws, then the very freedoms or "human rights" on which democratic rule is ostensibly founded are jeopardized (Shulgin 1991). This is the case with the contemporary "War on Drugs" and the unprecedented intrusions into personal liberty which it inexorably occasions. It is a case where the "cure" is far worse than the "disease"; in which the proposed "therapy" is toxic and will prove fatal if administered in sufficiently high dosage. While the use of the drugs this shock therapy addresses continues unabated or indeed increases, freedom and dignity are on the ropes, and in danger of going down for the count.

I will adumbrate four different lines of argument against the contemporary prohibition of entheogenic drugs and, by extension, prohibitions of other drugs- from alcohol, opium or nicotine (all of which have been illicit substances in the past) to cocaine, heroin or marijuana (all of which have been legal far longer than they have been controlled substances). These four lines of argument might be grouped under the following headings: 1) scientific; 2) practical or legal; 3) moral; and 4) economic. I will

[About this Document](#)

also pose the following question: "why is it that western society cannot cope with euphoria and ecstasy?" This question is at the heart of the prohibition of entheogens. Although they are disguised as "Public Health Laws," the strictures against the entheogens are first and foremost limitations on the practice of religion in a broad sense; or in a broader sense still, are attempts to enshrine in law a certain perverse brand of what once was called "natural philosophy." I call it science, and the modern laws against entheogenic drugs are manifestly anti-scientific and indeed represent "crimes against nature."

[\[back to library \]](#) [\[back to books_online \]](#) [\[back to pharmactheon \]](#)

Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.



Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)



Special! Contribute \$150 to Erowid Center...
and receive a "Visionary Synthesis" Poster
Signed by chemist Alexander Shulgin

Proemium

A Scientific Perspective

from *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

Drug prohibition statutes are typically justified as "Public Health Laws," and conventional wisdom holds that enacting and enforcing such measures, governments are exercising their paternalistic function of protecting the citizenry from dangers to the public health, much as they would in framing and enforcing laws regarding the disposal of sewage, vaccination of schoolchildren, or pollution of the air by motor vehicles and industrial processes. Regarded from this perspective, drug prohibition is seen as benign, indeed, beneficent, and this viewpoint has become so firmly rooted in the public consciousness as to make the concept accepted universally as a legitimate exercise, nay, as a solemn responsibility of capitalist and socialist governments alike (Szasz 1974; Szasz 1992). In the United States, only the Libertarian Party has consistently opposed drug prohibition as an abuse of governmental power. In some countries, violations of drug laws are called euphemistically *delitos contra la salud*, "crimes against [public] health."

Nevertheless, viewed from a dispassionate, strictly scientific perspective, this public health justification for drug control simply won't hold water, and it can be argued that, by placing certain drugs outside of the established quality control regimen for pharmaceutical products, governments are *defaulting* on their responsibility to protect the public welfare. While some prospective drug users dissuaded by laws prohibiting their chosen drugs, many, perhaps the majority, are not. During the experimental federal prohibition of alcohol in the United States from 1920-1933, some former alcohol users took the pledge and obeyed the law, whereas many, probably at least half, continued to use alcohol in spite of the laws (it is worth noting that alcohol *use*, like illicit drug use today, remained legal, and their were exceptions to the laws...sacramental wine was allowed to be manufactured and dispensed, and physicians suddenly discovered that prescription alcohol was a panacea, and it was prescribed liberally). Although it is impossible to establish firm numbers for present use of illicit drugs and the efficacy of the laws prohibiting them (Barnes 1988c), there is no question that many millions of users, more than 20-40 million in the United States or at least 10-20% of the adult population (Goldstein & Kalant 1990; Nadelmann 1989), are undeterred by the laws, and use drugs illegally. During alcohol prohibition in the United States, many inveterate users were accidentally poisoned by methanol and other solvents- poisonings which would not have occurred had legal controls of purity and concentration been in place; poisonings which ceased to occur once ludibund use of alcohol and its sale for that purpose again became legal. Similarly, now there are annually some 3500 premature deaths *per year* in the United States due to illicit drug use (Goldstein & Kalant 1990), many of them so-called "overdose" deaths from injected drugs, mainly opiates. Although these deaths are written off as "heroin overdose," the majority are rather due to adulterants and contaminants in illicit drug products (Chein *et al.* 1967; Escotado 1989a). After all, the typical samples contain only a few percent of heroin or one or another artificial succedaneum, and illicit products may also contain dust, mites and other minuscule arthropods, spores, virus particles and bacteria, which may either promote infection or sudden death from anaphylaxis or the toxicity of one or another adulterant. On the other hand, the injection, including self-administration, of sterile samples of pharmaceutical opiates of known potency is a common and safe procedure, and deaths as a consequence of such use are virtually unknown.

As for the presumed adverse ecological effects of illicit drug production, these are invariably the consequence of the drug laws themselves. Official drug-eradication programs involving spraying of 2,4-D, *Paraquat* and other herbicides have resulted in exposing smokers to toxic residues in marijuana, not to mention the massive ecological destruction, and its consequent deleterious effects on health of the exposed populace, occasioned by anti-drug herbicide spraying. By fostering the spread of clandestine laboratories, often in pristine jungle environments, drug laws lead to uncontrolled and unmonitored environmental pollution from unregulated chemical facilities. Under a legal regimen, presently illegal inebriating drugs would be manufactured in the open in existing facilities, whose liquid and gaseous effluents might effectively be observed. Not only are our health authorities defaulting on their responsibilities with regard to regulating purity of pharmaceutical products, but our environmental authorities are guilty of defaulting on their responsibilities to protect the environment and public health.

There is no doubt that illicit injection of black-market samples of drugs has become a major vector of transmission of AIDS, hepatitis and other diseases. In the United States and Europe, around 25% of all AIDS cases, including the majority of cases in heterosexuals, children and infants, are a direct or indirect result of illicit intravenous drug administration (Nadelmann 1989). The barbarous practice of denying access to sterile syringes without a medical prescription prevails in the United States, and has even taken root in some other backward countries, whereas in the great majority of the world's countries, sterile syringes are sensibly made available at low prices at pharmacies, even supermarkets, over-the-counter. The U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to prohibit use of "federal" funds for the independent state or municipal syringe exchange programs designed to halt the drug-related spread of AIDS (Hamilton 1992). This cruel and misguided drug control measure *is directly responsible for at least 25% of the new cases of AIDS in the United States*. Far from protecting public health, drug prohibition is drastically expanding the AIDS epidemic and contributing to the deaths of thousands of individuals in the United States alone from "drug overdose"- individuals who are deprived of the protection of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and its counterparts in other countries. This is especially important when we reflect that not all black market drugs are inebriants (Krieg 1967), not all illicit drug users are hedonists or thrill-seekers. Owing to the restrictive and monopolistic nature of the U.S. pharmaceutical industry, there are black markets in curative drugs which have not been approved for sale by the FDA but for which there is demand. Recent examples of black market medicines are the controversial cancer drug amygdalin or *Laetrile*, dimethyl- sulfoxide (DMSO), a topical treatment for bruises and sprains (users have been forced to employ industrial-grade DMSO, as no pharmaceutical grade is available), and the AIDS drug *Retrovir* or azidothymidine (AZT)- thanks to reforms in the FDA this drug has been made more widely available, and it has all but disappeared from the black market. The AIDS drug *Dexlute* or dextran sulfate is another example of a medicine which American patients had to "bootleg" from other countries (Booth 1988b). There are even black market drugs which don't fit either in the category of inebriants or chemotherapeutic agents- some products of the biotechnology industry are coming to be used illicitly by athletes. There now exists a black market in human growth hormone (hGH) and *Eprox* or human erythropoietin, used surreptitiously by athletes to improve their performance (Spalding 1991). The size of the black market in steroids for athletes has been estimated at U.S. \$100 million annually (Marshall 1988d) and is growing- athletic steroids are now being sold in health food stores! There are even athletic steroids which boost performance and are psychoactive- East German scientists developed a psychoactive testosterone nasal spray for illegal use by their Olympic athletes (Dickman 1991).

Other damage to the public health is occasioned by drug prohibition policies. Some presently illicit inebriating drugs have valuable therapeutic properties and thus potential to alleviate human suffering- they are not being systematically researched and developed as pharmaceutical products owing to the pall of disreputability cast over them by their legal misclassification. As we will see in Chapter 2, the most famous entheogenic drug, LSD, was originally developed by Sandoz Ltd. of Switzerland as a pharmaceutical agent, under the trade name *Delysid*. While the novel medicine showed considerable promise in psychotherapy (Delay *et al.* 1959b; Grinspoon & Bakalar 1979; Grof 1975; Heim 1961; Naranjo 1973a; Ratsch 1989), one of the most exciting pharmaceutical prospects which developed for the drug was an analgesic and psychotherapeutic adjunct to agonistic therapy, treatment of patients with painful terminal cancer or other fatal diseases (N.B. this has been incorrectly called *agonic* therapy; misusing a geometric term meaning "without angles" as opposed to *polygonic* "with many angles"). LSD, DPT (see Chapter 3) and other entheogenic drugs proved to be valuable long-lasting analgesic agents in some patients with severely painful, terminal conditions, drugs which did not numb and cloud consciousness in the manner that potent opiate analgesics do (Kast 1963; Kast 1966; Kast 1970; Kast & Collins 1964; Pahnke *et al.* 1970a; Pahnke *et al.* 1970b). The drugs also proved their worth in "brief psychotherapy"- aiding dying patients to cope with their situation (Grog and Halifax 1977; Pahnke 1970; Pahnke 1971; Pahnke & Richards 1990; Richards 1975; Richards *et al.* 1977; Richards *et al.* 1979). Thanks to this demonstrated medicinal value, the Swiss government has recently reclassified LSD as an experimental psychotherapeutic agent, making it again available to physicians (Hofmann 1991; Rayl 1992). Entheogens have also shown promise in treatment of alcoholism (Mikuriya 1971; Mikuriya 1973; Rhead *et al.* 1977; see Grinspoon & Bakalar 1979 for a review of this controversial research). Despite this plethora of therapeutic benefits shown by entheogenic drugs, their development as pharmaceutical agents was cut short by their legal proscription, and their illogical classification in Schedule I, as drugs with "no currently accepted medical use," all but eliminated any further research along these lines. Even much-maligned visionary drugs like the anesthetic phencyclidine (PCP or *Sernyl*) and its congener ketamine (*Ketalar* or "Vitamin K", used by some as an entheogen; Moore & Altounian 1978) have proven to have medicinal potential- as antagonists to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor agonists in the brain and potential protective agents against brain damage as a consequence of stroke and other neurological disorders (Barinaga 1990b, Olney *et al.* 1991). It has similarly been proposed to exploit the tendency of psilocybine to stimulate specific areas of the brain in the diagnosis of circulatory and other problems in the brain (Gartz 1993), perhaps in combination with magnetic imaging technologies. Even heroin, considered to be deadly poison in the U.S., continues to be regarded as valuable medicine in other countries such as Great Britain. Known pharmacologically as *Diamorphine*, heroin is considered to be more effective and safer than morphine in treating pain of myocardial infarction (MacDonald *et al.* 1967). Since both heroin and LSD have legal, medicinal use in other scientifically advanced countries, their U.S. legal designation as Schedule I drugs (with "no currently accepted medicinal use") is patently false and prejudicial.

The illicit drug best known for its medicinal use is marijuana (see Appendix A; Paton *et al.* 1973; Roffman 1982; Zinberg 1979). This drug has shown many medically-valuable properties, but is best known as an anti-nausea agent for patients receiving cancer or AIDS chemotherapy, and as a treatment for glaucoma- a drug to lower

the excessive intraocular pressure of this disease, which can lead to blindness (Roffmann 1982; Zinberg 1979). Both smoked marijuana and orally-ingested tetrahydrocannabinol (THC or *Marinol*, one of the active principles) have proven to be valuable adjuncts to cancer and AIDS chemotherapy and to glaucoma treatment. Nevertheless, the U.S. government, to avoid giving "mixed signals" in the matter of marijuana, recently stopped the distribution of government marijuana to new cancer, AIDS and glaucoma patients, although for the moment *Marinol* tablets will still be available (Blumenthal 1992). There is some evidence, however that smoked marijuana may be more effective for some patients (Roffman 1982), and it would be certainly less expensive, especially were cultivation for this purpose permitted. In any case, the U.S. government *does* give mixed signals with regard to marijuana and THC- on the one hand the marijuana plant and its active principal are listed in Schedule I as having "no currently accepted medical use"; then the same government shows the error of this misclassification by *itself* distributing marijuana and THC for medical use! Summing up the negative effect of drug prohibition on medical research in a recent article of *Science* magazine, Princeton University professor E.A. Nadelmann stated (Nadelmann 1989):

Current drug laws and policies, however, greatly hamper the efforts of researchers to investigate these and other potential medical uses of illegal drugs; they make it virtually impossible for any of the illegal drugs, particularly those in Schedule I, to be legally provided to those who would benefit from them; and they contribute strongly to the widely-acknowledged undertreatment of pain by the medical profession in the United States.

These and other examples underscore the fact that a decidedly negative result of the prohibition of entheogenic drugs has been the curtailment of promising lines of clinical research, and the withholding from the public of potentially valuable medicaments. The laws are thus working to *the detriment* of public health, quite in contrast to their ostensible purpose of protecting public health. Meanwhile, the proscribed drugs are readily available to all comers on the street corner, and the user is deprived of the quality-control guarantees his tax dollars are paying the Food and Drug Administration authorities (and their counterparts in other countries) to provide. Yes, "junkies" and "long-haired potheads" pay taxes too, and enjoy the same rights to protection as "nicotine fiends" and "short-haired gin freaks." We will leave until the next section a discussion of how the public health has been jeopardized by the criminalization of the black market in drugs. Just as serious as the direct deprivation of potentially valuable medicaments from the pharmacopoeia is the curtailment of basic scientific research consequent to drug prohibition. Because of the bureaucratic difficulties associated with research involving controlled substances (Strassman 1991), and due to stigmatization of the field in the eyes of personnel in the granting agencies and the scientific colleagues of would-be researchers who "peer-review" their grant proposals or decide on awarding of tenure, *etc.*, basic research with entheogenic agents all but disappeared following their legal control in the 1960's. Indeed, investigating positive applications of illicit entheogenic drugs is considered to be the "kiss of death" to a conventional scientific career. Our scientific culture has decided it will "just say no" to information which can be derived from basic research on entheogenic substances (Horowitz 1991), information which could be vital to furthering our understanding of basic brain function. Scientists are thus forced for political reasons to discard a tool enabling them to approach the classic brain/mind problem of philosophy- the biochemistry of consciousness itself. Since the illicit entheogen DMT is now known to be a neurotransmitter in mammalian brains (Christian *et al.* 1976; Christian *et al.* 1977; Corbett 1978), research on this drug and related indole entheogens (many of which are already illegal) is a most promising line of inquiry for neurochemists studying information processing in the brain, and for biomedical researchers interested in developing therapeutic agents to modify pathological malfunctioning of the human nervous system. The laws are militating against this sort of research.

Nevertheless, such research will continue, perhaps in countries with fewer regulations or a more enlightened policy toward drugs. The passage in the United States of the "Controlled Substances Analogues Act" of 1986 has been widely perceived as illegalizing research involving synthesis, with the intention of studying their effects in human beings, of any of the illicit entheogenic substances or their automatically illegal congeners (Repke 1992). It has become illegal in the United States even to attempt to synthesize and test completely novel compounds... the government essentially presuming to declare anything illegal unless specifically authorized! Talk about socialistic central planning and governmental control of industry! Pursuing this sort of draconian legal overregulation will ultimately doom the United States pharmaceutical industry to technological and economic inferiority, as the next generation of mind-drugs is developed elsewhere. After an American chemist working for a U.S. pharmaceutical company published (before the enactment of the 1986 law) ethically flawless, legitimate research dealing with completely legal, novel analogues of DMT, research conducted on his own time, his company was subjected to a special investigation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and he was threatened with dismissal! When pharmaceutical companies are restricted by excessive regulation, they simply invest elsewhere, where their research can be accomplished with a minimum of interference. A recent example was the decision of Swiss pharmaceutical multinational Ciba-Geigy to abandon plans to construct a new pharmaceutical production facility in the firm's home city of Basel, Switzerland. Because of the political power of anti-biotechnology activists in Switzerland, the firm decided to cancel construction plans for the \$125 million facility in Basel, and instead is building a plant across the border in Huningue, France (Aldhous 1992). Needless to say, jobs in Basel are threatened by this development.

Besides crippling neurochemical research and depriving the public of valuable medicaments, drug prohibition occasions other, tangential and collateral damage to scientific enterprise. An important recent example has to do with the U.S. governments deployment of a line of "aerostats"- balloons outfitted with sophisticated radar equipment and tethered at around 10,000 feet altitude along the U.S./Mexico border and the Florida coast. The purpose of these aerostats is to monitor non-commercial aviation traffic across the border in search of aircraft engaged in illicit drug smuggling (Marshall 1988b). These radar eye-in-the-sky balloons, however, interfere with radio astronomical research by observatories in Arizona and elsewhere. In particular, the aerostat radars, which are powerful radio transmitters, broadcast radio signals in the 1215-1350 MHz frequency range, and effectively blind the astronomical equipment to the red-shifted hydrogen spectra of distant galaxies (Stone 1991). Scientific research once again suffers because of the obsession of the U.S. government with drug enforcement- increasingly an anti-scientific endeavor. As an American citizen, it is profoundly embarrassing to me to contemplate the spectacle of an array of gigantic balloons strung along the border with Mexico... just imagine, balloons... the country is coming to look ever more like some sort of immense used car lot, which the broken-down economy mismanaged by an anti-scientific government increasingly resembles as well!

[\[back to library \]](#) [\[back to books_online \]](#) [\[back to pharmactheon \]](#)

Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.



Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)

Support Erowid and get our new EroLogo t-shirt!

Proemium

Practical and Legal Considerations

from *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

The fundamental problem with the concept of drug control is that most human beings, in all eras and cultures about which we know, have used and enjoyed drugs to modify their mood or state of mind. In the United States, for example, there are nearly 200 million people over the age of 12, of which 178 million are caffeine users (89%), 106 million are alcohol users (53%), 57 million are nicotine users (28%), along with approximately 12 million marijuana users (6%), some 3 million cocaine users (1.5%), 2 million heroin users (1%), with about a million users (0.5%) each of the entheogens and non-ethanol solvents (according to the governments conservative data from a household survey; Goldstein & Kalant 1990). Not only are the numbers of illicit drug users greatly inferior to the numbers of users of legal psychoactive drugs (alcohol, nicotine, caffeine), but the scope of health problems associated with illicit *versus* licit drug use shows a similar disparity. Compared to the estimated three to four thousand deaths *per* year as a consequence of all illicit drug use combined, approximately 320,000 Americans die prematurely *each year* as a consequence of tobacco use, and they are accompanied to the graveyard by an additional 200,000 premature cadavers each year resulting from use of alcohol (Nadelmann 1989). Although there are approximately three times as many nicotine users in the United States as users of all illicit drugs combined, there are nearly 100 times as many deaths as a result; and although there are about five times as many alcohol users as illicit drug users, alcohol is responsible for some 50 times as many deaths. One might conclude that tobacco is some thirty times more dangerous than entheogens, marijuana, cocaine and heroin; and that alcohol is about ten times more dangerous... or one might claim that in time we will discover that additional premature deaths are in fact due to illicit drug use. Nevertheless, the disparity is striking, and it cannot be argued that illicit drugs are justifiably illegal because they are dangerous, as long as substances evidently much more dangerous are legal. Because something is dangerous does not justify illegalizing it, in any case. Whereas the comparatively benign psilocybine-containing mushrooms (see Chapter 5) are illegal, the deadly-poisonous amatoxin- and phallotoxin-containing *Amanita* and *Galerina* species are perfectly legal (Ott 1978b; Ott 1979b). Similarly, with regard to drug toxicity deaths, 70% are the result not of illicit drugs but of legal prescription drugs, of which it is said that 300 million doses *per* year are "abused" (Hollister *et al.* 1991).

I might also mention that, whereas both alcohol and nicotine are highly addictive substances (Byrne 1988; Schelling 1992), the entheogens show no pattern of habituation or withdrawal syndrome (Hofmann 1980). In a recent article arguing *for* drug control, on a 1-5 scale of "relative risk of addiction" (with 1 being the highest risk), addiction authorities A Goldstein and H. Kalant rated nicotine a "2" along with heroin, with alcohol rating a "3" along with barbiturates and benzodiazepines or "sleeping pills" (Goldstein & Kalant 1990). Marijuana was given a "4," and the entheogens a "5," together with caffeine. In a rebuttal to letters in response to their article (Hollister *et al.* 1991), Goldstein & Kalant commented that the entheogens really *didn't even belong on a table of risks of addiction*, since these drugs are "aversive rather than reinforcing in animal models" - that is, that experimental animals will *avoid* them rather than become habituated to them. Although many people persist in ignoring the fact that nicotine is an addictive drug (a recent letter complained "to compare nicotine with crack would seem an assault on common sense"; Levin *et al.* 1992!), former U.S. Surgeon General C.E. Koop stated in no uncertain terms (Byrne 1988:

The pharmacological and behavioral processes that determine tobacco addiction are similar to those that determine addiction to drugs such as heroin and cocaine... We should also give priority to the one addiction- tobacco addiction- that is killing more than 300,000 Americans each year.

In the former Soviet Union in 1990, tobacco shortages sparked widespread riots, forcing emergency importation of American cigarettes (Frankel *et al.* 1992b)! Long-suffering consumers would endure stoically chronic shortages of food, clothing and energy, but not tobacco- this, in the country in which the *real* Czar once ordered the execution of tobacco smokers (Szasz 1974)! As if to underscore the metabolic similarity between heroin addiction and nicotine addiction, the hypotensive drug *Clonidine* has been found to ameliorate or diminish both heroin and nicotine withdrawal symptoms (Glassman *et al.* 1984), and former National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) director W. Pollin stated that tobacco addiction was "no different from heroin or cocaine" (Holden 1985). In magazine advertisements by Marion Merrell Dow, Inc., manufacturers of *Nicorette* chewing gum (containing nicotine polacrilex in 2 to 4 mg doses per piece), it is stated quite plainly: "your body's addiction to nicotine is a medical problem." Chewing the gum is said to "relieve the discomfort and anxiety that are nicotine withdrawal symptoms," and slowly reducing the daily dose of *Nicorette* will "enable your body to adjust and slowly overcome its addiction." The gum became famous when former "Drug Czar" W.J. Bennett, who on assuming his post had given up a two pack-*per*-day cigarette habit to set a good example (Marshall 1989), later admitted that he had relapsed, and was still hooked on nicotine gum. Just say no!

Not only is psychoactive drug use nearly universal among American adults, but virtually every culture that has been studied has been found to make use of one or another inebriating substance (Weil 1972). Moreover, there is increasing evidence for the use of medicinal and inebriating plants by non-human animals (Siegel 1989; Siegel & Jarvik 1975; Siegel *et al.* 1974; Sigstedt 1990; Williams 1989), of which the most famous example is that of catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) as an inebriant by housecats, a use to which most any species of feline is susceptible, given access to the drug (see Appendix B; Tucker & Tucker 1988). The American Association for the Advancement of Science recently held sessions on "zoopharmacognosy" at its annual meeting (Gibbons 1992). Clearly, use of inebriants is a normal, ordinary, animal activity, virtually universal among members of our species, and any legal attempts to prohibit one psychoactive substance in favor of another (which, after all, involve questions of taste, tradition and prejudice rather than any scientific criterion) is automatically destined for trouble. Laws simply will not deter many millions of people from using the drugs of their choice, but they can distort and pervert the legal system and wreak all sorts of havoc in the attempt.

An avowed purpose of drug control measures in the United States is to increase the street prices of illicit drugs. In this sense, the costs imposed on traffickers by the necessity of escaping detection and by the loss of occasional shipments or the arrests of personnel constitute a sort of "business tax" which is passed on to the consumer. The governmental expenditures on drug enforcement can be seen as a subsidy of the illicit drug dealers. As Professor Nadelmann put it (Nadelmann 1989):

The greatest beneficiaries of the drug laws are organized and unorganized drug traffickers. The criminalization of the drug market effectively imposes a de facto value-added tax that is enforced and occasionally augmented by the law enforcement establishment and collected by drug traffickers. More than half of all organized crime revenues are believed to derive from the illicit drug business; estimates of the dollar value range between \$10 and \$50 billion [U.S. \$10-50 thousand million] per year... If the marijuana, cocaine, and heroin markets were legal, state and federal governments would collect billions of dollars annually in tax revenues. Instead, they spend billions in what amounts to a subsidy of organized criminals.

We will return below to the economic consequences of the drug laws. Here the important point to note is their lack of efficacy. In driving up the prices of illicit drugs, the laws enrich criminals and lead to petty theft and other crime to enable users to pay the exorbitant prices which result. Besides arbitrarily classifying millions of users as criminals, and forcing the users into contact with the criminal element sometimes associated with drug trafficking, the drug laws *provoke* more crime- drugs which would otherwise be cheap become expensive as a consequence of official policy, and theft and related crimes increase proportionately. The public health is again degraded, as the citizen is placed in greater danger of muggings and burglaries, even of being an innocent victim of a shootout between rival drug gangs fighting over territory. A hard-boiled, medical analysis of drug laws in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded (Edison 1978):

The laws controlling narcotic and other psychoactive drugs... should be evaluated for effectiveness and safety in the same way we would evaluate surgical or pharmacologic treatment. As a treatment, the drug laws appear to be only marginally effective. Their side effects are so dangerous that the treatment is often more devastating than the disease. A judgment based strictly on the effectiveness and safety of the drug laws would require their immediate repeal or overhaul.

In a similar vein, Daniel E. Koshland Jr., the editor of the premier American scientific journal *Science*, a man with extensive career experience in the chemistry and pharmacology of opiate drugs, commented in an editorial entitled "The War? Program? Experiment? on Drugs" (Koshland 1989):

The drug program recently unveiled by the Executive Branch... is at least a useful experiment, and should be labeled as such... A minimal requirement would seem to be ongoing analysis of the program's degree of success, to decide whether to continue in the same direction or to seek new directions if the program is not succeeding... The experiment will be acceptable only if accompanied by a scientific detachment that says, "The get-tough experiment is under way. If it fails, legalization is next."

Nevertheless, the government understandably shies away from studying the efficacy (or lack thereof) of its own efforts against drugs, and has repeatedly been accused of "flying behind" in the "War on Drugs" (Hamilton 1990; Marshall 1988a).

While the government experiments with the "get-tough" approach, scientific developments have compromised severely the forensic chemical basis for evidence in the ensuing drug-related prosecutions. The interesting discovery that the illicit entheogen DMT appears to be a mammalian neurotransmitter (Christian *et al.* 1976; Christian *et al.* 1977) and that the drug normally occurs in cerebrospinal fluid (Corbett *et al.* 1987) raises important legal questions. Moreover, diazepam or *Valium* has been found

The absurdities and incongruities into which we fall in the looking-glass world of the drug warriors by no means end there. A recent article in *Science* proclaimed that the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) "Aims to Fight Drugs with Drugs," that "the agency is planning a massive search for medications to treat cocaine and other addictions," looking for "magic bullets for addiction" (WalDROP 1989)! The only "magic bullets" for addiction the authorities have found so far are the .38 caliber variety injected by police special revolvers! Let's treat whiskey addicts with gin while we're at it... or heroin addicts with methadone... surely they can't be serious! Do they say this with tongue in cheek, or do they have something else in cheek... perhaps a goodly drop of leaves from the "stupid bush" which the CIA chemical warriors were searching for in the Caribbean in the fifties and seem to have found at home on Langley (Marks 1979)? We must call recall that heroin was originally marketed as a "cure" for morphinism (Escobedo 1989a; Latimer & Goldberg 1981), and one of the "magic bullets" against addiction, bromocriptine or *Parodel* (see Chapter 2, Note 9), is already suspected of being itself an addicting drug (Holden 1989b). The article goes on... claiming this could be a "Manhattan Project for chemists" so what does that mean, "nuke" your neighborhood junkie or hippie? Maybe that's not too far off the mark- a recent review of a book about the Manhattan Project by prominent physicist Freeman J. Dyson drew a specious analogy between LSD and nuclear weapons: "nuclear weapons and LSD are both highly addictive... Both have destroyed many lives and are likely to destroy many more..." (Dyson 1992). Nobody said Dyson was an expert on entheogenic drugs, but the scary fact is that *Science* published this absurd fancy, and this well-respected scientist was apparently serious. Of course, I realize NIDA has no intention of treating whiskey addicts with gin... more like treating whiskey addicts with methanol... forcing people off one drug, the effects of which they happen to like, and substituting another drug which will do everything for them but provide the pleasure they originally sought in drugs! This is treatment... or assault?

Chemical detection technology has progressed to such a point that we are all in danger of being the "enemy" in the "War on Drugs"... or prospective casualties. Recently a military pilot, a commissioned officer of the United States Air Force, was ignominiously court-martialed for illicit drug use when amphetamine residues were detected in his urine. Thanks to a little scientific detective work, it was later proved that an over-the-counter anorexic (diet pill) he had been taking quite legally, a product which contained phenylpropanolamine as active agent was contaminated in the manufacturing process with trace amounts of amphetamine, as were other lots of similar products tested. The court-martialed pilot was given back his commission and reinstated to active duty, but not restored to his prior flight crew status (Pool 1989). It is significant that a major legal challenge to government plans to screen employees' urine for drug metabolites was mounted by U.S. Customs agents, the Grand Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police and U.S. Department of Justice federal attorneys who commented: "they test, we sue" (Crawford 1988)! Note that these are the "frontline troops" in the "War on Drugs," and they don't want "the people" to know what drug metabolites are in *their urine!* A company called Psychomedics is now fighting the "urinalysis lobby" for a piece of the \$200 million per year U.S. drug testing market- promoting a technology based on infinitesimal residues of drugs or drug metabolites in hair samples (Holden 1990c). There is some evidence that merely allowing your fingers to touch your hair after handling some of the Federal Reserve Chairman's cocaine-blighted bills could make you a candidate for a positive reading in a "hairanalysis" drug test... or taking a stroll through the park and inadvertently passing through some marijuana smoke exhaled by some brazen lawbreaker (it has been demonstrated that such "passive" exposure to *Cannabis* smoke can lead to false positive readings for marijuana use in blood and urine tests too; Moreland *et al.* 1985). Urinalysis also involves the problem of "false positives" if detection thresholds are set low enough to detect all users (Schwartz *et al.* 1987). The ultra-sensitive analyses for drug metabolites in urine cannot tell whether morphine in the urine came from a shot of heroin or a few poppyseed rolls with sinner. Do you still think the troops fighting the "War on Drugs" are on your side... can you be sure you won't one day be considered "enemy"? Perhaps the "skinheads" are on to something...

The inequities and incongruities drug laws force on our legal system are many and weighty. Scientists presently are vociferously debating (and rightly so) the statistical and legal interpretations of forensic evidence based on DNA analysis, so-called "DNA-fingerprinting" in which the DNA of an individual left at the scene of the crime is amplified by PCR technology (The Polymerase Chain Reaction invented by K. Mullis, formerly of Cetus Corp.). A recent article in *Science* (Chakraborty & Kidd 1991) questioned the claimed statistical significance of "matches" between DNA "fingerprints" (in reality, autoradiograms of electrophoretic separations on polyacrylamide gel of fragments of digested DNA), and the editors of the journal felt compelled to take an unprecedented step by simultaneously publishing a rejoinder to this article (Lewontin & Hartl 1991) and a news article explaining why (Roberts 1991), all followed by an editorial (Koshland 1992) and a spate of letters and rebuttals (Wills *et al.* 1992). This is as it should be, for the technology promises to revolutionize the nature of evidence, both accusatory and exculpatory. The extreme care with which the scientific community is treating the establishment of standards for DNA fingerprinting, however, contrasts markedly with the standards prevailing in a modern American drug-violation prosecution. Entrapment of the defendant is the rule, and sometimes undercover group A of municipal drug police is working assiduously to entrap undercover group B of state or federal police, and there have even been shootouts between two different police units. This is protecting the public welfare? Eyewitness testimony purchased from avowed criminals (whether outright with cash, or with pardons or reduced sentences) is *de rigueur*. The luckless defendant may have been subjected to an illegal wiretap or search and seizure without warrant or probable cause, but since the police were "acting in good faith" (the police are always "acting in good faith," aren't they?) the evidence is admitted. Even more shocking and fraudulent is the established American practice of regarding one gram of 10% heroin to be one gram of heroin (when in reality only one-tenth of a gram of heroin is involved) in considering sentencing or the charge (simple possession is distinguished from possession with intent to sell, which carries much stiffer penalties, by the quantity of drug seized as evidence). This is especially absurd when doses of LSD are seized, which may contain only 25 to 50 mcg of the drug on a piece of paper or gelatin weighing tens or hundreds of milligrams (Shulgin & Shulgin 1991). Imagine the innocent farmer wending a weary way to the barn in a bucolic setting with a couple of tons of hay on the truck... hay which contains morphine (Hazum *et al.* 1981) in trace quantities... by this standard (s)he could be arrested for possession of a couple of tons of morphine, and go down in history as one of the all-time great *narcotraficantes*. How about an Untouchables-type raid on a pasteurization plant, to bust the nefarious pushers of tons of "morphine"-milk containing traces of the drug, that is? My ludicrous tone masks genuine concern—as a citizen subject to the possibility of entrapment and wire tapping, to all sorts of chicanery, prestidigitation and fraud in the name of law enforcement, I demand to know... we *must* know... on what basis can "the people" prosecute ill-starred individuals in possession of "grams" or "kilograms" of illicit drugs, meanwhile allowing traffickers in "tons" of *Valium*, morphine, codeine, DMT or any number of other controlled drugs to go free? *On what basis?*

17-Jun-10 1:55 AM

Police" under the National Socialist German Worker's Party, or "Nazi" government of Adolf Hitler). Bizarre and illegal raids and seizures have been directed against so-called "computer hackers," the police assiduously taking advantage of the legal dispensations given to "drug warriors" (Gans & Sirius 1990; Holden 1990b; Levy 1991; Sirius & Gleason 1990; Sterling 1992. As a recent article in *Mondo 2000* noted:

Acting on the request from certain corporations, the FBI and the Secret Service- armed with vaguely worded warrants- have raided businesses and homes of private citizens and seized tremendous numbers of computers and related items, with very few corresponding arrests. The language of the warrants was vague because even in the rare case where the government knows what it is looking for, on the electronic frontier, it probably has no idea what it is looking at. (Gans & Sirius; italics in the original)

After snooping illegally on conversations over electronic bulletin boards, and because of government agents' profound ignorance regarding the terminology employed, a business called Steve Jackson Games, Inc. was raided by the Secret Service, three computers and data for a product in development (a non-computer game seized, and the company was almost driven into bankruptcy (Holden 1990b; Levy 1991). No crimes had been committed, nor were criminal charges ever brought against the company or its employees, who were not compensated for damage to equipment (when the computers were returned six months later, one was destroyed and another required a \$200 repair) and financial losses exceeding \$125,000. Owner Jackson was forced to lay off eight of his 17 employees to stay in business. The raid was conducted pursuant to a vaguely-worded warrant which was not explained to the owner of the business, and when his lawyer asked to see the warrant, he was told the information was "sealed." Thanks to the excessive zeal of our drug-bust-crazed police, eight people lost their jobs, having committed no crimes- will some of these innocent victims turn to drug-dealing to support their families? In a related case in which the government brought charges against an alleged "computer criminal" for supposed complicity in stealing information from a telephone company, information alleged to be "highly proprietary" and worth \$79,000, the prosecution ignominiously dropped the charges in mid-trial when the defense showed the alleged stolen property was public information, readily found in public libraries and openly distributed by the company in question for \$13 by calling a toll-free number (Levy 1991)... the grand larceny charge evaporating to petty theft before the astonished prosecutor's eyes! This case exposed the legal charade for what it was- not police fighting crime, but a war over "freedom of information," over control and ownership of information, and against the libertarian element favoring freedom of access, whether to information or to drugs (Clarke 1992; Ross 1991). But the U.S. government insists on having unfettered access to information- the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), in collaboration with the U.S. State Department, is prohibiting the export of "RSA" data-encryption programs (for encoding computer or other digital data) which exceed a standard, in this case allowing only "algorithm keys" of 40 bits or less. This enables the NSA, with its state-of-the-art, to be able rapidly to "crack" any codes it wishes, whereas a 512 bit "key" is considered necessary for relative security, given the speed of today's supercomputers (French 1990). The FBI has proposed a bill and a "Digital Telephony Amendment" to the 1934 "Communications Act" which will require any new communications system (including computer networks) to be designed to allow facile wiretapping by the authorities; even though in 1990 U.S. judges approved only 872 legal wiretaps (Levy 1992). This is like requiring that condoms or automobile airbags have holes in them! Of course, the way to make computer networks secure against "hackers" and spies (which the NSA is ostensibly looking for- domestic spying is supposedly beyond its reach) is *to allow effective encryption of data*, not to conduct Gestapo-like raids, not to seize or destroy computers. As long as the government wishes to have access, it will be available to anyone with the ingenuity to discover the "back door" to any computer system. In the Steve Jackson Games case, one of the computers seized was at the time running an electronic bulletin board, a form of expression which the U.S. Constitution protects as surely as it protects printing presses and broadcast media. Federal Judge Sam Sparks agreed, and subsequently awarded Jackson and associates \$55,000 plus court costs in their suit against the Secret Service, ruling the investigation had violated the "Electronic Communications Privacy Act." In his judgment in Austin, Texas, Sparks held that electronic bulletin boards qualify as publishing under the law, entitling operators like Steve Jackson Games, Inc. to the protection of the "Privacy Protection Act" which limits government access to files and records of journalists and publishers (Ortega 1993). Although freedom of information appears to have won this round, can anyone be deluded into supposing that the U.S. government will draw the line at "computer hacking" as it flexes its new police muscle? Is it likely U.S. law-enforcement officials will draw the line anywhere?

In a recent interview with an American journalist, the chief of Amsterdam's narcotics police commented that the idea of a "War on Drugs" reminded him of Gestapo, German police who "thought they could change society's behavior. The police are a very dangerous element in society if they are not limited. We know what war means... We fight war against our enemies, not with our own citizens" (Beers 1991). In the Netherlands drug laws similar to the American laws are on the books, but the Dutch government administers them in a fashion characterized as "harm reduction" or "flexible enforcement"- narcotics chief Zaal commented that illegal drug users are "patients, and we can't help them by putting them in jail" (Beers 1991.) In the wartime United States, then-Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee that illicit drug users "ought to be taken out and shot" for "treason" (Beers 1991). In the "War on Drugs" only the users are shooting the drugs, the police are shooting at us; *people* are the enemy, *people* become casualties. It is a dangerous cat-and-mouse game, and although the police are ostensibly the cats catching and destroying the mice, nevertheless the mice in this case are leading the cats around by their noses, always a step ahead. This is an inevitable and predictable result of concentrating drug control efforts on the supply, rather than the demand.

The U.S. "War on Drugs" is a "supply-side" endeavor- 71% of the funds in the fiscal year 1991 "National Drug Control Strategy" was destined for reduction of supply (29% for "interdiction and international control"; 42% for law enforcement); only 29% for "demand reduction" (Goldstein & Kalant 1990). Since more than 75% of the nearly 750,000 yearly arrests for drug-law violations in the U.S. are for simple possession, mainly of marijuana (Nadelmann 1989), it can be said that the bulk of U.S. law enforcement effort is directed at punishing users, rather than reducing the supply. "Interdiction and international control" efforts have been, by and large, ineffectual. Despite intensive efforts directed against the illicit production of cocaine in South America, and toward interception of the drug at U.S. borders, the wholesale price of cocaine dropped 80% during the 1980s, while the purity of the drug as retailed increased *fivefold*, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) figures (DEA 1989). Since the DEA reported in 1987 that the foreign export price of cocaine represented only 4% of the U.S. retail price, there is no reason to expect a reversal in this utter failure to reduce supply- the drug is so cheap to produce and so lucrative that traffickers can and do easily counteract any increased activity or expenditures by the authorities. Once again, the laws constitute a subsidy to the traffickers- a "value-added tax," and the foreign aid money put into crop substitution programs in Peru constitutes a direct subsidy to increased planting of *coca*. Since the interest rates are so high, farmers simply plant a small parcel in one of the accepted substitute crops, as a cover, then use the bulk of the funds to plant more *coca* - the only crop sufficiently remunerative to enable them to repay the loans (Morales 1989). Except for opium poppies, that is... (Morales 1989; Ott 1992a)

Heroin production is even more lucrative and even less influenced by enforcement activities- according to the DEA, the foreign export price of heroin is only a fraction of 1% of its U.S. retail price. As the international control efforts against heroin have been directed chiefly at the "Golden Triangle" area of Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, traditional opium poppy growing regions, the traffickers have simply begun to introduce opium and heroin production in areas not traditionally known for this. Opium poppy cultivation has become so widespread in Mexico, that the country has emerged as one of the leading heroin suppliers to the U.S. market. Moreover, opium poppies have become the natural and preferred substitute crop for *coca* in South America, and heroin production in being introduced in Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and even Guatemala. Enforcement activities have thus led the black market to its *own* crop-substitution scheme, and opium poppies are being substituted for *coca*, with the inevitable result that any reduction in the supply of cocaine will be more than compensated for by a substantial increase in the supply of heroin. This is progress... this is protecting the public health?

The U.S. authorities have been relatively more successful in reducing the smuggling of marijuana into the country, yet there is a plentiful supply of marijuana on the U.S. market. Not only is the drug cheap to produce (foreign export price 1% of U.S. retail price, according to DEA figures), but the unintended (though entirely predictable) results of the U.S. campaign against the drug have been the conversion of the U.S. into one of the world's leading producers of the drug and the transformation of many former marijuana smugglers into cocaine and/or heroin smugglers (Adler 1985)- as costs of smuggling increase, smugglers will turn to loads with a higher value per unit of weight. Thus exaggerated attention focused by the authorities on the smuggling of marijuana has led to vastly increased domestic production, obviating the necessity of sneaking the drug past beagle-eyed customs officials. The value of the U.S. marijuana crop in 1987 was estimated at \$33.1 billion (\$33,100 million; Siegel 1989). The market is still supplied, but in a manner less visible to the authorities, immeasurably more decentralized and much less susceptible to control efforts. While this development may help the country's international balance of trade, it hasn't made much of a dent in the supply, and has made future attempts to influence the supply infinitely more difficult. Furthermore, the necessity of indoor intensive cultivation to escape surveillance has led to the development of super-potent strains of *Cannabis* approaching 20% THC, nearly double the concentrations found in natural, outdoor strains previously considered to be the most potent. The price has gone up, yes, but producers have managed to continue to supply the market with a product superior to that formerly smuggled, are much less likely to be arrested, and are making much more money! Does anyone still doubt, as Professor Nadelmann claimed, that the producers and traffickers of illicit drugs are the chief beneficiaries of the laws (Nadelmann 1989)?

Another predictable response to "supply-side" enforcement efforts has been the introduction to the black market over the past 15 years of a series of completely artificial heroin analogues. The first of these so-called "designer drugs" (Kirsch 1986) to appear on the U.S. market were derivatives of *Meperidine* or *Demerol*, such as MPPP, which is about 25 times the potency of the parent compound and about three times the potency of morphine. The most famous of "designer narcotics," however, are the compounds known as "China White"- derivatives of the medicinal *Fentanyl*, a compound some 100 times the potency of morphine. The best-known of these black-market derivatives is (alpha)-methyl-*Fentanyl*, roughly 3000 times the potency of morphine. According to the DEA, starting materials and equipment to make a kilogram of this drug cost about \$2000, with the product being worth as much as a billion dollars (\$1000 million)! It is important to note that this compound was an invention of black market chemists, never described in the chemical literature (Baum 1985; Shafer 1984; Shafer 1985). Once again, "supply-side" enforcement directed against opium poppy cultivation and heroin production has stimulated domestic production of inexpensive succedanea thousands of times the potency of morphine. In a similar manner, exaggerated attention focused on illicit cocaine production and smuggling is fueling the growth of the U.S. amphetamine industry. Annual domestic production of methamphetamine is estimated to be worth \$3 billion (\$3,000 million; Cho 1990). Again, the U.S. trade deficit has been helped, but comparatively large-scale and visible enterprises such as heroin and cocaine production are being replaced by practically invisible small-scale substitutes. Instead of international networks of growers and harvesters, chemists and smugglers, now all that is required are solitary chemists inside the countries of consumption. As drug policy experts A. Goldstein and H. Kalant stated in a recent article:

Advances in pharmaceutical chemistry are such that highly potent psychoactive drugs of every kind can be synthesized readily in clandestine laboratories, so the illicit market would adjust quickly even to a complete sealing of our borders, were that possible. (Goldstein & Kalant 1990)

Misguided enforcement efforts have resulted in the creation of decentralized and small-scale production of alternatives, practically invisible to the authorities. Production costs go down, profits skyrocket, and the chances of detection and arrest are reduced- the illicit drug manufacturers and retailers couldn't be happier.

It is simply too easy to outwit the drug laws. Well before the authorities realize what is going on, talented surreptitious chemists have invented new, more profitable, and legal succedanea for controlled drugs. When one of the "designer heroin" labs was busted, the chemist told police he was experimenting with "snow cone flavorings" (Shafer 1984). When the results came back from the forensics laboratory, the police found they had no case against the person. When (alpha)-methyl-*Fentanyl* was finally identified (the first structure proposed by the DEA chemists, 3-methyl-*Fentanyl*, later turned out to be erroneous; Ayres *et al.* 1981; Baum 1985) and the drug was scheduled, the ingenious chemists made *para*-flouro-*Fentanyl*, still legal. Finally, the government concocted the "Controlled Substances Analogues Act" establishing the novel principle that any chemical or pharmacological analogue of any illicit drug could be deemed to be illegal! This is a textbook case of an unconstitutionally-vague statute, and is the purest essence of arbitrary and selective law enforcement, crystallized in a form more potent than any *Fentanyl* derivative. Never mind that this absurd law makes virtually anything illegal which some police chief or district attorney doesn't like (Shulgin 1992), and is virtually illegalizing scientific research into mind drugs and making the whole field of chemistry suspect; the important thing is it simply will not work. Sure, it will enable charges to be brought against manufacturers of new analogues, on the rare occasions when such are detected and arrested, but the genie is out of the bottle. The laws have made illicit drug synthesis so profitable and it is such a simple endeavor, that no law will stop it, not even capital punishment. The laws even serve as textbooks for would-be black market drug chemists, who look through the schedules for ideas for new products (Shulgin & Shulgin 1991).

Having touched on the subject of Constitutional vagueness, it is important to stress that scientific research continues to reveal new plant (and animal) species containing illegal compounds. Since controlled substances such as DMT, morphine and codeine appear to be general mammalian neurotransmitters, dog and cat (or other mammal) owners are technically in unauthorized possession of illicit drugs *all the time*. As we will see in Chapter 5, there are at least 89 species of mushrooms now known to contain illegal psilocybine, and another 57 species can safely be assumed to contain these compounds. This book mentions some 250 plant species known to contain illicit drugs. Some, such as the forage grass *Phalaris arundinacae*, are common articles of commerce which can be purchased cheaply by the truckload; some, like the psilocybian mushrooms, grow adventitiously all over the world. Since one would have to be expert in plant taxonomy and phytochemistry, and would have assiduously to study the latest research reports in order simply to know which plants are illegal, plants which might grow unbidden on one's property at any time, it can be said that the laws interpreted as proscribing these plants are "unconstitutionally vague"- it is not immediately obvious to the ordinary citizen, nor indeed to anyone, just what is illegalized by these laws. In fact, with the advent of the "Controlled Substances Analogues Act" of 1986, any and all plant and animal species can be said to be illegal, at the whim of the government. Short of being an expert in several scientific fields and devoting considerable time and effort keeping abreast of the latest phytochemical and botanical research, some of which is published in German (Gartz 1986c), Spanish (Guzman 1983), French (Heim & Hofmann 1958), Italian (Festi 1985; Fiusello & Ceruti-Scurti 1972; Samorini & Festi 1989), Czechoslovakian (Pouzar 1953), Norwegian (Kvambe & Edenberg 1979; Nordbo 1979) or other languages, there is no way for any citizen to be certain (s)he is not in illegal possession of a proscribed drug.

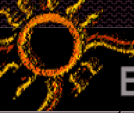
This is all a result of misguided, supply-side enforcement. As long as demand exists for illicit drugs, and as long as the laws guarantee, nay, subsidize the profitability of meeting this demand, people will line up for the chance to enter this business. As even informed opponents of drug legalization acknowledge, only by targeting the demand side can we make strides toward reducing the consumption of illicit drugs (Goldstein & Kalant 1990; Jarvik 1990). Empty propaganda accompanied by a "war" against users (recall that 75% of arrests in the U.S. are for simple possession) who are treated as vermin, as vectors of transmission of a "plague" (Szasz 1974) only alienates them still further from authority. Only by treating people with respect and offering them unbiased information and viable alternatives (N.B. jail is neither an effective deterrent nor a viable alternative; Packer 1968; Skolnick 1968) can governmental authorities hope to dissuade users from this or that drug. There is evidence that information campaigns can influence drug use (Elickson & Bell 1990). Suasion, not coercion is the answer, and the voice doing the persuading must be morally impeccable. As Shakespeare's Hamlet lamented: "ay, there's the rub."

[\[back to library \]](#) [\[back to books_online \]](#) [\[back to pharmacotheon \]](#)


Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.



THE VAULTS OF
EROWID




Go

[About Erowid](#)
[Join / Donate](#)

[Plants & Drugs](#) ▾
 [Mind & Spirit](#) ▾
 [Freedom & Law](#) ▾
 [Culture & Art](#) ▾
 [Library](#) ▾

Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)



Get Your Psychoactive Poetry Magnets
 Donate \$45 and bring poetic drug musings to your fridge

Proemium

Moral Aspects of War

from *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

It is commonly stated that illegalizing drugs is the "moral" for a government to do, since drug use is thought by some to be immoral, even to degrade the moral fortitude of citizens. But the governments taking this "moral" stance mostly sanction and support the use of drugs like alcohol and nicotine, as do the vast majority of those citizens "morally" opposed to illicit drug use, the bulk of who themselves are drug users. As an American and a Canadian authority on drug addiction research stated in a recent article:

The time is long overdue to recognize officially, publicize, and incorporate into common speech and legislation the fact that tobacco (nicotine) and alcohol are potentially hazardous addicting drugs. We need to expunge from the language the phrases, "alcohol and drugs" and "tobacco and drugs." This is not mere semantic nit-picking; language influences the way we think. (Goldstein & Kalant 1990)

I had already made this same point five years before (Ott 1985; Ott 1993b), in a book on chocolate addiction which treated our provincial and prejudiced attitudes toward drugs with ludibry. As Princeton Professor Nadelmann put it in his well-conceived "moral" arguments *for* the legalization of all drugs (Nadelmann 1989):

"Moral" condemnation by the majority of Americans of some substances and not others is little more than a transient prejudice in favor of some drugs and against others.

I might add that this holds true for the "moral" condemnation in some Moslem countries of alcohol, and the corresponding prejudice in favor of *hashish* and opium (Gelpke 1966a)- this is a universal, not a peculiarly American tendency, although the drugs socially accepted vary from one society to the next, as of course the drugs scorned. So firmly rooted is our tendency to ignore alcohol and tobacco when thinking about "drugs," that the American Society of Pharmacognosy (which should know better) announced in 1992, 33rd annual meeting featuring two symposia, one of which was about "Drugs of Abuse," under the sponsorship of Phillip Morris- USA- one of the country's leading tobacco companies and pushers of one of America's most-abused drugs!

As for the immoralities of drug prohibition, the most obvious of these involve the above-mentioned perversion of law enforcement the drug laws inevitably foster. Since the nebulous alleged victims of drug law violations (our children? our schools? the public health?) do not file charges with the police, in order to enforce the drug laws the police have to become criminals themselves (some would argue that in many cases, this is a seamless transformation). Thus our tax dollars are used to buy and sell drugs, as the police disguise their true employment and act as though they were everyday illicit drug merchants, hoping to get close to "Mr. Big." Then they will try to sell him some of their "dope," or buy from him some if his, then... surprise! Out come the guns and badges. Not only do the police immorally become liars and drug dealers and drug dealers, but this type of operation invites corruption, and there are innumerable instances of police freelancing on the side. Annually in the U.S. some 100 police officials are indicted in federal courts on corruption charges related to drugs (Nadelmann 1988). Should "Mr. Big" come up short of cash for the big buy, no problem... some other "undercover" agents will step in and provide financing. There have even been cases in which reluctant individuals were provided with government money to buy government drugs, and then arrested! This is law enforcement... or manufacturing *ersatz* crimes? Not content to be ludicrously dope dealers, the "moral" police become spies and snoops, "Peeping Toms tapping phones, spying windows, hiring criminals to spy on their associates, cajoling people to inform on their spouses, children to inform on their parents, even sifting through garbage in search of "evidence." Not only do we have shootouts between rival "gangs" of police fighting over turf and mistaking each other for the "enemy," but there was recently a case of illegal computer hacking *by the police*. During confirmation hearings for former "Drug Czar" W. J. Bennett, Delaware Senator J. Biden, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, described a case in which personnel of an unnamed federal agency involved in the "War on Drugs" surreptitiously lifted another's budget by altering a computerized file" (Marshall 1989)! o wonder Bennett went back to his nicotine habit!

Another immorality of the "War on Drugs" involves questions of emphasis. Grossly exaggerated attention has been directed toward apprehending and convicting drug offenders, many of whom become subject to compulsory sentencing. Although the staggering number of annual drug arrests in the U.S. represents only about 2% of the true number of "offenders," trying and punishing those convicted is clogging our criminal justice system. In Washington, D.C., for example, 52% of the felony indictments were for drug law violations in 1986. In New York the following year the number was 40% (Nadelmann 1989). Vital police resources which ought to be destined for arresting and processing violent criminals are being squandered on drug users and the occasional merchant. Worse than that is the fact that already convicted, violent criminals are being released from jail early, to make room for the compulsory-sentenced drug offenders (Marshall 1988c). When the second "Drug Czar" R. Martinez was governor of Florida between 1986 and 1990, Florida spent more money than any other state on drug enforcement, and had in place strict mandatory-sentencing laws mandating three-year-minimum sentences for using, buying or selling illicit drugs within 310 meters of schools, public parks or college campuses. During this tenure, the average sentence served by Florida murder convicts *decreased* 40% and the average robbery sentence served *declined* 42%. The overall average sentence for all Florida convicts *declined* 38%, to the point where the average Florida convict was serving 32.5% of his sentence before release... less than a third (Keil 1990). The bottom line is that some luckless student caught sucking on a joint after school serves three years (if not more), while the armed criminal who knocks off the convenience store gets three years and walks in one. A society that coddles murderers and armed robbers in order to "get tough" on potheads is not walking the moral high ground.

Another egregious case of the immorality of drug prohibition involves the infamous "Operation Just Cause." In the name of police activity and drug law enforcement, the sovereign nation of Panama was invaded by a large American military force, hundreds of innocent bystanders were killed [transcriber's note: some cite a figure close to 9,000. J.T.J.], hundreds of millions of dollars of private property were destroyed, and a couple of dozen of "police" were killed in the line of duty, mostly by their own troops. Is it any wonder former President Bush was practically tarred and feathered when he foolishly dared to set foot in Panama in spring of 1992? The ostensible purpose of the invasion was to arrest Gen. Manuel Noriega and "Shanghai" him to the United States to stand trial. We've all seen Hollywood "shoot-'em-up" cop fantasies, but by what standard of "morality" does any "police" operation justify such massive carnage and monumental property destruction? Never mind that Gen. Noriega who was later tried as a prisoner of war, not as an arrested criminal) was a longtime U.S. government employee in various covert operations involving immoral attempts to destroy one sovereign government and prop up another. It is a basic tenet of police work that the innocent must be protected. "Just Cause" indeed... "Just 'Cause Uncle Sam says so"! Later, the government went to all lengths to convict Noriega to "justify" the operation. It is significant that former heads of the U.S. DEA were subpoenaed to testify on Noriega's behalf, and the drug convict Carlos Lederer, considered by U.S. officials to have been one of the world's major international drug traffickers, led the hit-parade of criminals testifying against him. Lederer was all but pardoned in exchange for his turncoat testimony against Noriega, and will apparently be released from prison into the Witness Protection Program (Cohn & Reiss 1992). Once again, the "big fish" goes free in order to get the "small fry" into the skillet.

Is it "moral" to launch aerial herbicide spraying programs in South America against *coca* cultivation, indiscriminately destroying crops and forests; polluting watersheds and in general causing untold ecological havoc It is significant that the Eli Lilly Company, manufacturer of the herbicide *Tebuthiuron* which the U.S. government wished to spray in Peru, refused to sell the product for this purpose, citing "practical and policy considerations" (Sun 1988). The herbicide is so persistent in the environment that it is not approved in the U.S. for spraying on cropland, and the area in which the *coca* spraying was to be carried out is interspersed with plots of food crops. We will see in Chapter 2, Note 15, that in the 1950s the Eli Lilly Company went to bat for the U.S. government in illicit LSD synthesis, but not this time, and a State Department official told Congress that the department was exploring ways to compel Lilly to produce the herbicide for the government! So this is how "free trade" works... In the Upper Huallaga Valley of Peru, 1.5 million liters of *Paraquat* have already been sprayed (Brackelaire 1992), while massive spraying of *Paraquat*, 2,4-D and *Glyphosate* in Colombia have already provoked health problems in the indigenous population (Bourgetau 1992). A successful non-government crop substitution scheme in Colombia's Cauca Valley, involving planting of mulberry bushes for cultivation of silkworms (offering prospective legal incomes *even higher* than illicit *coca* cultivation; unlike government-sponsored substitute crops) has been frustrated by U.S.-backed spraying of *Glyphosate* directed against illicit *coca* and opium poppy crops in the region (Liounis 1992). Is it moral to tell poor Peruvian and Bolivian peasants that they must cease to grow their traditional and most lucrative crop, *coca*, which is perfectly legal in their countries, in favor of some substitute acceptable to bureaucrats in the U.S. which will yield them a much lower return, perhaps only a third of their already meager income (Morales 1989)? It is immoral and a fundamental violation of their human rights (Boldo' i Climent 1986; Ott 1992a)! Furthermore, how does a rich well-shod, well-fed city-slicker explain this drastic pay cut to a poor, possibly malnourished and barefoot Indian... that (s)he must cease to grow her or his traditional crop (Martin 1970; Mortimer 1901; Plowman 1979; Shultes 1981), the legal stimulant *coca*, and substitute instead coffee, another legal stimulant acceptable to the *gringos*? Moreover, inasmuch as *coca* is considered to be one of the most nutritious vegetables available in the Andes, and an integral and nourishing part of native diets (Burchard 1975; Burchard 1979; Duke *et al.* 1975), and coffee, apart from a decent amount of the B-vitamin niacin, is virtually worthless as a food (Ott 1985; Ott 1993b), forcing this substitution in the "moral" struggle against drugs will increase malnutrition and hardship for these poor Indians. Furthermore, there is a glut

of coffee on world markets, and coffee prices continue to fall, with no relief in sight for beleaguered growers (Frankel *et al.* 1992). Finally, although *coca* monoculture, like any mono-culture, causes ecological damage, at least the plant is well adapted to the environment of the Andes and Amazonia, while the substitute crops require even more energy and agrichemicals than do *coca*, resulting in *yet greater* ecological damage (Brackelaire 1992).

Of course, the chorus goes, we must explain to them that cocaine is destroying the health of our children a continent away, although we do need *some* of their *coca* to flavor our *Coca-Cola* (which is our accepted caffeinated stimulant, that we give to children as a matter of course; Ott 1985; Ott 1993b) and to produce cocaine for the pharmaceutical industry. But how would we feel if an expeditionary force of morally outraged South Koreans descended on Virginia and nearby states and began to spray herbicides on the tobacco crop and adjacent food crops, and to insist that out farmers instead plant ginseng? What an absurd idea, and anyway, what has that to do with the subject? It happens that our government recently coerced the Korean government into accepting American tobacco in exchange for computers and stereos (yes, and ginseng, too)... help balance the payments, you see. And there are Koreans who are justifiably outraged morally, and claim that our tobacco and "Marlboro Man" propaganda for use of this pernicious addictive drug (Schelling 1992) is destroying the health of young Koreans! What if a renegade band of hell-raising Mexican police swaggered into the U.S. and kidnapped an American citizen, dragging him to Mexico to be tried and punished under Mexican laws? American police *have* done precisely that in Mexico (and more than once!), despite protests from the Mexican president and ambassador, and the Mexican government has threatened to banish American police, who are acting illegally, from national territory. How can it be possible that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that American police operating outside of American territory are not bound by constitutional limitations on their power? That came as a shock to the Mexican government, which knew all too well that the DEA myrmidons were not operating under Mexican law, and a formal diplomatic request for a policy statement ensued. How can it be possible that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that kidnapping a Mexican citizen in Mexico did not violate bilateral U.S./Mexican extradition treaties? This decision has made the U.S. justice system the laughing-stock of the world, and provoked a serious crisis in U.S./Mexican relations. The Mexican government reacted by suspending temporarily DEA activities in Mexico and demanded renegotiation of bilateral extradition treaties (Anon. 1992a). Is it "moral" that American tax monies be used to finance in other countries police tactics like indiscriminate roadblocks and searches which are illegal in the U.S.? The only "moral" principle being followed here is that "might makes right"!

Pursuant to the Americanism "money talks," there is another flagrant immorality in drug prohibition. The "false profits" generated by illicit drug trade create all sorts of "false prophets in our society. Try though the government may to convince America's poor that "crime doesn't pay" and "drugs equal slavery" (a bizarre and insulting message to African-Americans whose ancestors were brought to America in chains in literal slavery with the sanction of the very government making the statement), children in America's ghettos see that the people who are upwardly mobile in dead-end neighborhoods, the people who have the cars, friends and fancy clothes are the drug dealers. Many of the successful members of predominantly poor minority groups are living in the suburbs and gentrified urban neighborhoods with Whitey, out of sight, and don't set much of a day-to-day example. But the happy drug dealer on the corner is doing obviously much better than the guy flipping burgers for minimum wage or sweeping up at the supermarket. The lure of the free market in drugs, and the profit to be made brings out the entrepreneurial instinct in people who haven't fair and open access to the legitimate business world. By making drugs a lucrative business open to all, prohibition sets bad examples for youth and there's the rub- young ghetto children can see where the opportunity is, and in the ghetto, it's not at the burger joint... it is in drugs.

I have already had occasion to detail the anti-scientific nature of drug prohibition and its adverse impact on public health. I need not mention that laws contributing to the spread of AIDS and hepatitis, laws which keep valuable medicines from sick people whose suffering could be alleviated by them, laws which hamper medical research, laws which lead to deaths by poisoning from contaminated and adulterated drugs the government is responsible for overseeing, that laws like these are immoral. Moreover, if we study the history of these laws, we find them to be grounded in racial prejudice and discrimination against minorities. As J. Helmer has thoroughly documented in his study *Drugs and Minority Oppression* (Helmer 1975), the first American drug laws were a thinly disguised attempt to cripple Chinese immigrants in their all-too-successful economic competition with Americans. The first American drug law was passed in San Francisco in 1875 and illegalized opium *smoking*, a Chinese pastime, although opium was commonly used orally and such use remained legal. A law was passed in 1887 prohibiting importation of smoking opium, which only the Chinese used, and Congress formally endorsed the true intent of this "drug" legislation when it passed the "Chinese Exclusion Act" in 1901, which prohibited importation of *Chinese*. Later a similar pattern was repeated with cocaine, which was seen as a drug of America's blacks. In countless lurid stories in the press, the message was driven home that "cocaine is often the direct incentive to the crime of rape by Negroes of the South" (Helmer 1975). Such racist and immoral charges exacerbated racial tensions and led to many lynchings. History again repeated itself in the thirties, as the spectre of marijuana, the "Assassin of Youth," a drug then associated with poor Mexican immigrants, was employed to discriminate against Mexicans, leading to the infamous "Marihuana [sic] Tax Act" of 1937 (Helmer 1975). Racial discrimination is immoral and drug legislation, used as a cover for official discrimination, is morally tainted thereby.

But this litany of immoralities of drug prohibition, which by no means exhausts the subject, is perhaps less significant than the glaring and fatal flaw in the supposititious "moral" campaign of the United States government against "drugs"- it is a case of the filthy pot calling the tarnished black kettle black. For the U.S. government, like many other governments in the world, is and has ever been earnestly engaged in the drug business. According to U.S. government figures, recent annual direct tax revenues to federal, state, and municipal governments in the U.S. from alcohol sales (excluding real-estate and income taxes on the companies engaged in manufacture and sale of alcohol), amounted to \$10.3 billion (\$10,300 million; Anon 1987). In other words, all levels of government in the U.S. are engaged in the drug trade, making about \$50 per year in alcohol income from every adult American, teetotalers included. Federal, state and municipal governments in the U.S. also profit from taxes on tobacco feeding American's nicotine habits, and the U.S. federal government has in place crop supports *subsidizing* the cultivation of this most deadly of all drugs (recall that tobacco use causes 320,000 premature deaths *per* year, in the U.S. alone). Congressman H.A. Waxman from California rightly called the tobacco industry a "multi-billion dollar drug empire" (Byrne 1988). Thus all levels of government in the U.S. are earnestly and profitably engaged in the drug business, even monopolizing the sale of alcohol in many states and fixing the prices. The "moral" campaign against illicit drugs is thus exposed for the hypocritical exercise it is: for "moral" reasons we won't let you use this or that drug, but we'll be happy to profit from your use of alcohol or nicotine! Hell, we'll even help guarantee profits of our tobacco growers, and help them push their dope on unwilling customers overseas. This is no moral campaign, it is the basest hypocrisy. It has also been argued that agricultural subsidies to industrialized countries tend to drive Third World farmers to produce illicit drugs, which at least don't have to compete against the subsidies (De Rementeria 1992).

Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter 2 (especially Note 15) and Chapter 3 particularly Note 2), the United States government itself is guilty of massively abusing LSD and other drugs. Since these entheogens are not habit-forming, and because tolerance develops so quickly to the drugs' effects that it is impossible to experience these with regular use (many days, perhaps a week, have to elapse between doses or little or no effect is felt; and in animal experiments the entheogens serve as aversive, not habituating agents; Hollister *et al.* 1991), one cannot "abuse" the drugs oneself. "abuse" consists in giving drugs to unwitting or unwilling subjects. In the decade of the 1950s, the "Cold War" raged, and the overzealous activities of the U.S. government during this time have been characterized as the "American Inquisition" (Kutler 1982). One fruit of this institutional paranoia was MKULTRA, an insidious domestic "research" and spying operation run by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and similar "nonconventional chemical warfare" studies conducted at the U.S. Army's Edgewood Arsenal. In a program of research into interrogation drugs and illegal chemical warfare agents, LSD and other entheogenic drugs were given to at least 1500 American military personnel and countless civilians (Lee & Shlain 1985; Marks 1979). Some of the troops were coerced into "volunteering" for the tests, and some of the civilians were given the drug without their consent or knowledge. One such dosing of a civilian employee of the CIA, Frank Olson, led to depression and suicide. The government kept secret the circumstances of the death ("national security" of course, but when a "Freedom of Information Act" lawsuit forced public disclosure of the MKULTRA files, then-President Gerald Ford was forced publicly to apologize to Olson's family. Canadian citizens subjected to psychological torture (including repeated doses of LSD) as part of this "research" later sued the U.S. government and were paid compensation. One civilian subject of the Edgewood Arsenal tests was killed by a massive overdose of MDA, an Army doctor commenting: "we didn't know if it was dog piss or what it was we were giving him" (Lee & Shlain 1985; Shulgin & Shulgin 1991). The CIA employed prostitutes and surreptitiously filmed U.S. citizens unwittingly drugged by the prostitutes, as they disported in bed. Helpless "mental patients" in a New York institution were almost killed by murderous injections of bufotenine and DMT combined with electroshock and "insulin coma" (Turner & Merlis 1959). Over 800 drugs, including LSD and bufotenine, were tested on prisoners in the federal government's Lexington, Kentucky "Addiction Research Center Hospital." In this publicly-funded institution (officially a penitentiary) which existed to "cure" drug addiction, prisoners were given injections of heroin and morphine as payment for cooperation in the "experiments" (Lee & Shlain 1985). When Sandoz Ltd. of Switzerland, owner of the patents on *Delysid* (LSD tartrate), refused to cooperate with the U.S. government's desire to stockpile huge quantities of the drug for military purposes, the government ordered Eli Lilly Company of Indiana to make the drug in violation of international patent accords. Yes, Eli Lilly Company and the CIA became the first illicit manufacturers of LSD, more than a decade before the drug was illegalized! It goes without saying that dosing people with experimental drugs without their consent or knowledge, especially helpless "mental patients" and prisoners, is highly unethical and immoral, not to mention the immorality of employing prostitutes with taxpayer's money to dope unwilling "Johns" while perverse CIA agents made stag films behind whorehouse mirrors! There is no doubt the MKULTRA "research" was instrumental in spreading the extra-scientific use of LSD all over the United States and in many other countries as well (Lee & Shlain 1985; Stevens 1987), while the publications by phony CIA "front" research foundations (such as the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation) were fostering scientific, popular and clinical interest in the drug (Abramson 1955; Abramson 1960). This immoral "research" and consequent promotion of ludible use of LSD was conducted by the same government which later presumed to illegalize entheogenic drugs on the grounds of "morals" and to protect the public health!

Not only is the U.S. government engaged in trafficking legal inebriating drugs, and guilty of abusing LSD and other drugs in secret experiments, but there is abundant evidence that at times the same government itself has been engaged in the illicit drug trafficking to raise money for covert military campaigns. Under the pretext of aiding the Hmong people of Laos, our "democratic allies" in the "fight against communism" in Vietnam, secret CIA "front" companies such as "Air America" were engaged in smuggling opium to Saigon from the "Golden Triangle" area of Southeast Asia (McCoy 1972). Since the major cash crop of the Hmong was opium poppies for illicit heroin production, the government secretly went into the opium smuggling business to help our "allies" get their product to refineries in Saigon. In a gruesome twist, the Criminal Investigation Division of the United States Army discovered that cadavers of U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam were being gutted and stuffed with as much as 23 kg of heroin each, then transported on government planes to Norton Air Force Base in California (Kwitny 1987). This pattern of smuggling activity again was repeated in the shameful "Iran-Contra" affair during the administration of Ronald Reagan. In violation of a Congressional ban on military assistance to the Contras, a CIA-organized and funded band of anti-Sandinista *contrarevolucionarios* (the Sandinistas ran the legally-elected government of Nicaragua at the time), the Reagan covert warriors organized secret shipments of weapons and ammunition to the Contras. Some pilots engaged in the illegal gun-running later testified that once munitions were unloaded from the aircraft in Central America, cocaine or marijuana was loaded for the return trip. In testimony before a U.S. Senate committee, pilot M. Tolivem described transporting 15 tons of weapons from Homestead Air Force Base in Florida to Aguacate, Honduras in a DC-6, which he flew back to Homestead loaded with 25,360 pounds of marijuana (Labrousse *et al.* 1992). This cocaine and marijuana no doubt contributed greatly to the off-the-books financing of the sleazy operation. When protesters broke into a session of the Congressional investigation of the mess, demanding that the subject of cocaine smuggling be probed, leading to questions by one panel member, panel Chairman Senator D. Inouye of Hawaii called a secret session on the grounds of "national security," away from the cameras and the hearing of the public. One protester was given three years in prison; the cocaine smugglers working for President Ronald Reagan were never brought to trial (McCoy & Block 1992;

Marshall 1991; Scott & Marshall 1991). One of the most famous black-market LSD chemists of the sixties, R.H. Stark, credited with having made as many as 200 million doses of the drug, was later exposed as a U.S. CIA "contract agent" in a sensational Italian trial (Escotado 1989a; Lee & Shlain 1985. Was this man freelancing, or was the CIA purposefully distributing LSD among radicals and "hippies" in a harebrained sort of "unconventional chemical warfare" attack? After all, the CIA *had* pioneered underground LSD synthesis, and *had* fomented use of the drug in "research" sponsored by phony CIA "front" organizations!


I submit that a government like that of the United States of America, which is running a profitable, multi-billion dollar legal drug-pushing operation, which kills hundreds of innocent people in order to "arrest" one of its former operatives (employed during four presidential administrations over a 15-year period in covert military operations); a government which has secretly poisoned countless civilians including helpless mental patients and prisoners with LSD and other drugs and surreptitiously filmed doped taxpayers cavorting in bed with government-paid prostitutes; a government which has driven one of its own employees to suicide by secretly doping his cocktail with LSD; a government which has not hesitated to smuggle narcotics and cocaine to raise dirty money for illegal military campaigns in violation of Congressional bans; that such a government has no "moral" basis whatever for prohibiting *any* drug. The actions of this government, not its words, show a callous disregard for public safety, and a willingness to stoop to anything to further its domestic or international political aims.

[\[back to library \]](#) [\[back to books_online \]](#) [\[back to pharmacotheon \]](#)


Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.




THE VAULTS OF
EROWID



[About Erowid](#)
[Join / Donate](#)

Plants & Drugs ▾Mind & Spirit ▾Freedom & Law ▾Culture & Art ▾Library ▾

Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)



Special! Contribute \$150 to Erowid Center...
and receive a "Visionary Synthesis" Poster
Signed by chemist Alexander Shulgin

Proemium

The Economic Side of the Coin

from *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

According to a recent economic analysis of drug prohibition in the U.S., in 1987 American drug enforcement costs amounted to at least \$10 billion (\$10,000 million). Approximately half of this expenditure is by the federal government; half by state and local governments (Nadelmann 1989). As the U.S. military forces, never known for economizing, got more deeply involved in the "war," costs are bound to skyrocket- Michigan Senator C. Levin estimated military costs at \$2 million *per* drug seizure; U.S. Navy costs at \$360,000 *per* arrest (Marshall 1988b)! Already the country with the world's highest *per capita* prison population, the U.S. Sentencing Commission estimates that as a consequence largely of drug laws, the federal prison population will double or triple from the 50,000 current inmates to 100,000 or 150,000 in the next decade, half of whom will be incarcerated for drug law violations (U.S. Sentencing Commission 1987). Drug-related convictions have already become the leading cause of incarceration in the State of New York and elsewhere. As Prof. Nadelmann commented (Nadelmann 1989):

State and local governments spent a minimum of \$2 billion last year to incarcerate drug offenders. The direct costs of building and maintaining enough prisons to house the growing population are rising at an astronomical rate. The costs, in terms of alternative social expenditures foregone and other types of criminals not imprisoned, are perhaps even more severe.

Not to mention the loss of tax revenues from employed drug offenders who lose their jobs and go to jail... forcibly transformed from taxpayers to expensive wards of the state! This massive misappropriation of taxpayer's money is enriching criminals, contributing to the spread of AIDS and hepatitis, hampering biomedical research, degrading the morals of our police personnel who succumb to corruption, contributing to lack of respect for authority, and abjectly failing in deterring the 20-40 million Americans who persist in using illicit drugs. If, instead of ceding control of the drug market to criminals who thereby become rich and powerful, the government were to legalize these drugs, the \$10 billion loss would be converted to at least \$10 billion in new taxes which could be used for drug education and treatment, along with the \$10 billion saved by not criminalizing 10 or 15% of the U.S. population. Note that this policy change would represent at least a \$20 billion benefit for federal, state and local treasuries, and could help reduce the federal deficit.

Far more important than monetary savings, however, is the fact that government could begin to exercise control over the market, instead of defaulting on its responsibilities and relinquishing control of the market to the criminal element. Let there be no mistake about it- government "Newspeak" aside, illegalizing drugs in no way "controls" the market. The government illegalizing drugs is turning its back on control, and leaving it to the black marketeers to control the market. The illicit merchants, not the government, determine purity and adulteration; the manufacturers, not the government, decide what products to sell and set prices. History proves that, besides being more economical, legal regulation is more effective in reducing consumption. While the U.S. government illegalized alcohol consumption on a federal level during the period 1920-1933, the government of Great Britain opted for legal regulation- increased taxation, restriction of hours of sale and prohibition of sale to minors. While the U.S. death rate from cirrhosis of the liver (a consequence almost exclusively of alcoholism) dropped 50% during Prohibition (suggesting a 50% decline in alcohol consumption, it increased again to pre-Prohibition levels by the 1960s. In Great Britain, meanwhile, with legal control of a legal alcohol market designed to reduce consumption, the death rate from cirrhosis of the liver likewise declined 50% during the U.S. Prohibition period, *then declined 50% again* (to 25% of its previous high) by 1940, before settling in 1963 at a rate 33% of the 1914 rate (Vance *et al.* 1989). Besides raising taxes and avoiding waste of government funds and police resources, the British government was able to achieve equivalent or greater reductions in alcoholism under legal control, than was the U.S. government, which abandoned control and fostered the rise in organized crime. Instead of wasting \$10 billion a year on the "War on Drugs" which only exacerbates the problem and hizes crime syndicates, it is high time the U.S. government stopped abdicating its responsibility and began to attempt to control the use of drugs in American society.

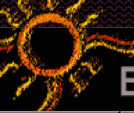
[About this Document](#)

[\[back to library \]](#) [\[back to books online \]](#) [\[back to pharmacotheon \]](#)


Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.



THE VAULTS OF
EROWID




Go

About Erowid
 Join / Donate

Plants & Drugs ▾ Mind & Spirit ▾ Freedom & Law ▾ Culture & Art ▾ Library ▾

Path : [library](#) > [books online](#) > [pharmacotheon](#)



Get Your Psychoactive Poetry Magnets
 Donate \$45 and bring poetic drug musings to your fridge

Proemium

Why Can't We Cope with Ecstasy and Euphoria?

from *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*

by Jonathan Ott

For the sake of freedom and dignity, for the sake of democracy, in the interests of shoring up the battered U.S. economy, it is time to call a truce in the "War on Drugs," an unconditional cease-fire. We can start by decriminalizing the entheogenic drugs, reclassifying them as prescription medicines as the Swiss government recently did, so that physicians and clinical re-searchers may resume the fruitful exploration of the therapeutic potential of these unique pharmaceuticals, which was so wrongly suspended in the 1960s. These wondrous medicaments, molecular entities which constitute a sort of "crack" in the edifice of materialistic rationality (Hofmann 1980), may be just what the doctor ordered for hypermaterialistic humankind on the threshold of a new millennium... a new millennium which could be the start of a new Golden Age, or the continuation and dreadful culmination of a cataclysmic cultural and biological Holocaust.

The essence of the experience conferred by entheogenic drugs is ecstasy, in the original sense of that overused word- *ek-stasis*, the "withdrawal of the soul from the body" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, p.831), what R. Gordon Wasson called the "disembodied" state:

There I was, poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen. (Wasson 1957; see also Chapter 5, Note 3)

More specifically, it is an ineffable, spiritual state of grace, in which the universe is experienced more as energy than as matter (Ott 1977a); a spiritual, non-materialistic state of being (Hofmann 1988). It is the heart and essence of shamanism; the archetypal religious experience. In the archaic world, and in the preliterate cultures which have survived in isolation into our time, shamanism and ecstasy represent the epitome of culture, the pinnacle of human achievement (Calvin 1991). The shaman is the cynosure of her or his preliterate tribe, (s)he is the thau-maturge, the psychopompos, the archetypal psychonaut journeying to the Otherworld to intercede with the ancestors or gods on behalf of her or his fellows. In the Age of Entheogens (Wasson 1980), in the archaic world, which still lives on in Amazonia and elsewhere, "every thing that lives is Holy," as William Blake expressed it, especially the living, breathing, planetary biosphere, of which we are an integral part, and holiest of all are the wondrous entheogens, imbued with spirit power. Modern western culture has no official place for the entheogens precisely because it has no place for ecstasy. Dedicated, as we are, to treating the universe as matter, not as energy or spirit (Blake wrote that "Energy is Eternal Delight"), it embarrasses us to be reminded that our planet is alive and that *every place* is a sacred place.

Even our western religions with their vestiges of entheogenic plant lore (the ever-present "Tree of Life" with its entheogenic fruit; Ott 1979b; Wasson *et al.* 1986) have forgotten their roots and worship symbols, knowing not the experience to which the symbols refer. As Joseph Campbell paraphrased Jung: "religion is a defense against the experience of God" (Campbell 1988). It is as though people were worshipping the decorations and hardware on a door- the portal to the Otherworld (Schele & Freidel 1990)- having lost the key to open it; having forgotten even that it is a door, and its threshold is meant to be crossed; knowing not what awaits on the Other Side. In the Judeo-Christian heritage, a horrendous duality has been imposed; the Divine is the Other, apart from humankind, which is born in sin. Despite overwhelming scientific and experiential evidence to the contrary, human beings are conceived of as a special creation apart from other animals, and we are enjoined to subdue the world, which is matter. This horrible superstition has led to the despoiling and ruin of our biosphere, and to the crippling neurosis and guilt of modern people (Hofmann 1980). I call this a superstition because when people have direct, personal access to entheogenic, religious experiences, they never conceive of humankind as a separate creation, apart from the rest of the universe. "Every thing that lives is Holy," *us* included, and the divine infuses all the creation of which we are an integral part. As the dualistic superstition took root in our ancestors' minds, their first task was to destroy all aspects of ecstatic, experiential religion from the archaic ("pagan") world. The destruction of the sanctuary of Eleusis at the end of the fourth century of our era (Mylonas 1961) marked the final downfall of the ancient world in Europe, and for the next millennium the theocratic Catholic Church vigorously persecuted every vestige of ecstatic religion which survived, including revival movements. By the time of the "discovery" of the New World, Europe had been beaten into submission, the "witches" and "heretics" mostly burned, and ecstasy was virtually expunged from the memory of the survivors. For the Catholics, and for the Protestants after them, to experience ecstasy, to have religious experiences, was the most heinous heresy, justifying torture and being burned alive. Is it any wonder that today we have no place for ecstasy?

In the New World, however, the Age of Entheogens and ecstasy lived on, and although in 1620 the Inquisition in Mexico formally declared the use of entheogenic plants like *peyotl* (see Chapter 1) to be heresy and the Church vigorously extirpated this use and tortured and executed Indian shamans, ecstasy survives there even now. It bears witness to the integrity of the New World Indians that they braved torture and death to continue with their ecstatic religion- they must have been bitterly disappointed in the "placebo sacrament" of the Christian Eucharist, which is a placebo entheogen (Ott 1979b)- and it is largely as a result of the modern rediscovery of the shamanic cult of *teonanacatl* (see Chapter 5) by R. Gordon Wasson in Mexico in 1955 that the modern use of entheogens, in many respects a revival of ecstatic religion, began. Even though myriad justifications for the modern laws against the entheogens have been offered up, the problem modern societies have with these drugs is fundamentally the same problem the Inquisition had with them, the same problem the early Christians had with the Eleusinian Mysteries- religious rivalry. Since these drugs tend to open people's eyes and hearts to an experience of the holiness of the universe... yes, enable people to have personal religious experiences without the intercession of a priesthood of the preconditioning of a liturgy, some psychonauts or *epoptes* will perceive the emptiness and shallowness of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition; even begin to see through the secular governments which use religious symbols to manipulate people; begin to see that by so ruthlessly subduing the earth we are killing the planet and destroying ourselves. A "counterculture" having ecstatic experiences in California is quite as subversive (Einhorn 1970) and threatens the power structures in Sacramento or Washington just as much as the rebellious Albigensians or Cathars, Bogomiles, Fraticelli "de opinione," Knights Templar and Waldensians threatened the power structure in Rome and Mediaeval times (Cohn 1975).

Since ecstasy was heretical, *euphory*, or euphoria (etymologically "bearing well") was suspect, and the same Protestant ethic which warned that sex should not be enjoyed nor indulged in except for breeding held any ludible use of drugs to be sinful. This approach has been aptly described as "pharmacological Calvinism" (Klerman 1972). There was even a time when *any* use of drugs was considered to be sinful, when herbalists and midwives were burned at the stake beside the heretics, prayer being accepted as the only legitimate therapy (Ott 1985; Ott 1993b), when even laughter and smiles were the Devil's handiwork. While some might consider these ideas to be quaint, even antiquated, we must recall that the American government has recently denied syringes to drug users and contraceptives to students- saying: "teenagers should be encouraged to say 'no' to sex and illegal drugs" (Anon. 1990)- "just say no" being considered to be the best contraceptive and the way to stem the drug-related spread of AIDS! Although we have at least 106 million alcohol users in the United States (54% of the population over 12 years of age), alcohol as inebriant is still illegal in parts of the U.S., and Puritan ideas regarding the sinful nature of inebriation are still dominant and underlie contemporary prohibition of just about every inebriant *but* alcohol.

Indeed, euphoria has generally been considered a *negative* side-effect of drugs, and structure-activity-relationship studies have been conducted with an eye to eliminating this "undesirable" trait! In reference to well-funded studies on alkaloids of opium and their derivatives, W.C. White, Chairman of a Committee on Drug Addiction of the U.S. National Research Council noted:

One of the chemical difficulties in this research has been to provide drugs which would prolong the pain control factor so as to reduce the need for repeated dosage and at the same time to eliminate the fraction responsible for euphoria... If this could be done, the same result might follow as occurred with cocaine... rapid decline in the use of cocaine as an addiction drug after the discovery of novacaine... (Small *et al.* 1938)

Perhaps it was a little early to declare victory in the "War on Cocaine," but White was correct in noting that, in the case of that drug, it was possible to separate the local-anesthetic "factor" of the cocaine molecule from the stimulating aspect, yielding more potent local anesthetics with limited stimulating or euphoric effects, although it has been claimed that "experienced cocaine users" could not distinguish equivalent intranasal quantities of lidocaine, one of the synthetic local anesthetics, from cocaine (Van Dyke & Byck 1982) and that cocaine's euphoric allure and addictive power have been greatly exaggerated (Alexander 1990). In this case, however, the medicinal effect to be separated from the psychotropic "side-effect" is a local, peripheral effect. In the case of the opiate narcotic/analgesics, the medicinal effect of analgesia is as rooted in the brain as is the euphoric "side-effect," and it has been claimed that the drugs are addictive because they so effectively change peripheral sensations from painful to pleasurable; that is, that a non-addicting opiate is impossible, a contradiction in terms Szasz 1974). Indeed, the non-addicting narcotic appears to be the philosophers' stone of pharmacology, and the world has seen a parade of "non-addicting" (at least in pharmaceutical company propaganda) opiate analgesics, starting with heroin in the nineteenth century, some of which have even been marketed as "cures" for addiction (Escobotado 1989a). Some laypersons conceive of *Methadone* as being the "cure" for heroin addiction, when in reality it is another potent, addicting narcotic substituted for heroin in "narcotic maintenance" schemes.

Apart from the Puritan anti-pleasure ethic, inebriants like morphine, heroin, and cocaine acquired a bad reputation as a consequence of widespread use in so-called

Some say that Happiness is not Good for Mortals, & they ought to be answer'd that Sorrow is not fit for Immortals & is utterly useless to any one; a blight never does good to a tree, & if a blight kill not a tree but it still bear fruit, let none say that the fruit was in consequence of the blight.

The way to prevent people from drinking too much alcohol, or becoming addicts to morphine or cocaine, is to give them an efficient but wholesome substitute for these delicious and (in the present imperfect world) necessary poisons. The man who invents such a substance will be counted among the greatest benefactors of suffering humanity.

In a perverse way, the first steps toward this sort of "psychopharmacological engineering" have already been taken, in military research on performance-enhancing stimulants, in Nazi and CIA interrogation studies, in American research on "non-conventional chemical warfare" and in recent work on steroids to enhance athletic training and performance. Although the first tests of the effects of stimulants on soldiers, utilizing cocaine, were reported in 1883 (Aschenbrandt 1883), it wasn't until the second World War that stimulants, in this case amphetamines, came to be widely used by soldiers, and much of the comparative research on military applications of stimulants dates from the postwar period (Weiss & Laties 1962). Similarly, while the Nazi physicians at the infamous Dachau concentration camp pioneered the use of entheogens, in that case mescaline, as interrogation aids, it was American researchers participating in the MKULTRA project in the postwar era who really pursued this questionable sort of work. The use of steroids to enhance athletic performance is a recent development, and the former communist government of East Germany especially furthered this work with a secret cash program during the 1980s (Dickman 1991). As many as 1500 scientists, physicians and trainers were involved in the research, which had as one goal the development of highly potent steroid derivatives active in sufficiently low doses as to be undetectable in "antidoping" tests. One success of the project was a psychotropic nasal spray containing a testosterone precursor which would not register on the tests. R Hannemann, a champion swimmer, described the effects as "like a volcanic eruption," and said its use was mandatory for athletes who wished to compete on the East German team in the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. In a recent refinement, Chinese athletes competing in the 1992 Olympics at Barcelona (along with their former East German trainers), were reported to have used a training potion based on birds' nest and toad skin, which probably contained many active compounds, some of which are controlled drugs (see Chapter 3; Anon. 1992b). It is regrettable that such perverse (but effective) applications characterize the infancy of psychopharmacological engineering- we must recall the disproportionate success of East German and Chinese athletes in recent Olympic competition. I will suggest some more positive approaches.

There is also a demonstrated extra-medical need for stimulants in our society. Examples are pilots and air traffic controllers who must work all night and require constant wakefulness and vigilance, truck and bus drivers, emergency medical workers, police, customs agents and other officials, and of course, military personnel. By accident of history, caffeine in coffee, soft drinks and tea (and in stimulant tablets, such as *NoDoz*), and nicotine in tobacco products have come to be the accepted stimulants for use in the above-mentioned professions. I must stress, however, that caffeine and nicotine have been anointed as society's acceptable stimulants *by default*, since some of the alternatives are controlled substances, and in spite of research showing them to be inferior and unhealthy. Quite a bit of research has been conducted comparing caffeine with amphetamines, and almost invariably, amphetamines turn out to be superior to caffeine. Studies on reaction time under the influence of stimulants have found that in general caffeine has no effect on reaction times whereas amphetamines *decrease* reaction times (Adler *et al.* 1950; Lehmann & Csank 1957; Seashore & Ivy 1953; Weiss & Laties 1962). Amphetamines were also able to restore reaction times lengthened by fatigue in sleep-deprived subjects (Seashore & Ivy 1953). Marijuana (see Appendix A) on the other hand *lengthens* reaction time and impairs performance (Paton & Pertwee 1973b). With regard to steadiness of the hands, caffeine was found to *impair* steadiness (Adler *et al.* 1950; Hollingworth 1912; Hull 1935; Lehmann & Csank 1957), while amphetamines *improved* hand steadiness (Adler *et al.* 1950; Seashore & Ivy 1953; Thornton *et al.* 1939). In various coordination tests, amphetamines were in general more effective than caffeine in improving performance (Weiss & Laties 1962). Summarizing these and other studies, B. Weiss and V.G. Laties of Johns Hopkins University concluded (Weiss & Laties 1962):

Little of this sort of research has been conducted on nicotine, but tobacco smoking, and the resulting increase in carbon monoxide in the blood, is known to degrade night vision (Federal Aviation Regulations 1991; Levin *et al.* 1992; McFarland 1953; McFarland *et al.* 1944). Although caffeine and amphetamine stimulants have not been shown to improve intellectual performance, and caffeine has in fact been shown to *degrade* academic performance in college students (Gilliland & Andress 1981), there is evidence that some drugs, like arecoline, the stimulating principle of betel nut (Sitaram *et al.* 1978) and *Hydergine*, an ergot alkaloid preparation (Hindmarch *et al.* 1979) can improve human learning and intellectual performance. Research into so-called "smart drugs" represents a burgeoning new field of psychopharmacological engineering, which merits scientific support (Erich 1992; Jude 1991; Morgenthaler 1990; Morgenthaler & Dean 1991).

On the maiden flight of the shuttle in April, rookie astronaut Robert Crippen avoided the queasies by dipping into the medical kit for a NASA-developed prescription of Dexedrine, a stimulant, and scopolamine, a tranquilizer. (Rogers 1981; see Appendix A)

I am dying for a cigarette. I haven't had one in three months. And if I hadn't been kept so busy, I don't know how I would take it. Would give all those strawberries and sugar of our entire stay in space for just one...

Some might object... even though caffeine is demonstrably inferior to amphetamines for pilots, everyone knows that amphetamines are "addictive" and hence unsuitable for such use. Such people will be well advised to consult the pharmacological literature on caffeine, which has been thoroughly documented as an addictive drug

As for medicinal use of entheogens, their widespread use on the black market has given us some guidelines, as have better than two decades of experimental clinical use before their illegalization (see Grinspoon & Bakalar 1979 for a review of this early work.) However, new compounds have continued to be developed and tested (Repke & Ferguson 1982; Repke *et al.* 1977b; Repke *et al.* 1981; Repke *et al.* 1985; Shulgin & Shulgin 1991), and some entheogenic plants or plant extracts such as *ayahuasca* (see Chapter 4) have begun to be used in modern psychotherapy (Kraijnc 1992), along with the "empathogen" MDMA (see Chapter 1; Adamson 1985; Adamson & Metzner 1988; Leverant 1986). Therefore new studies are necessary to determine which are the best entheogens for the following uses: 1) general, outpatient psychotherapy for various afflictions (Masters & Houston 1970); 2) "brief" psychotherapy in agonious treatment (Kast 1970); 3) long-lasting analgesia in agonious therapy; 4) marriage counseling; 5) group therapy (Blewett 1970); and 6) in experimental induction of dissociative experiences in psychotherapists as a part of their training. I think we will find that a variety of different entheogens will prove useful in various treatment modalities. For example, smoked, high-dose DMT would probably be the most effective drug for rapid induction of dissociative states in medical training (Bigwood & Ott 1977); LSD is probably the best drug in agonious therapy (Grof & Halifax 1977; and DET or CZ-74 or the plant drug *Salvia divinorum* (see Chapters 3 and 5 and Appendix A), owing to their short duration, might prove optimal for outpatient psychotherapy (Boszormenyi *et al.* 1959; Leuner & Baer 1965). Preliminary experiments with psilocybine (see Chapter 5) suggested this drug could help cut the recidivism rate of paroled convicts (J. Clark 1970; Leary 1968). Instead of going broke building more prisons for drug offenders, ought we not investigate one illegal drug which might help keep people out of the prisons we already have?

virtually all of the entheogens, or their natural prototypes, have already proven their worth in induction of ecstatic states in shamanism (Halifax 1979; Halifax 1982; La Barre 1970; La Barre 1972; La Barre 1979a; La Barre 1980a; Rosenbohm 1991; Wasson 1961) and in the catalysis of "religious experiences" (Clark 1969; W.H. Clark 1970; Felice 1936; Heard 1963; Leary 1964; Leary & Alpert 1963; Leary *et al.* 1964; Masters & Houston 1966; Metzner 1968; Paz 1967; Ricks 1963; Watts 1962; Watts 1963; Zaehner 1957; Zaehner 1972; Zinberg 1977). Well-known examples of shamanic use of entheogens, which will be documented thoroughly in this book, are: primordial Siberian shamanic use of the fly-agaric, *Amanita muscaria* (see Chapter 6); the Mexican shamanic use of *teonanacatl*, the psilocybin mushrooms (see Chapter 5); pan-Amazonian shamanic use of *ayahuasca* in South America (see Chapter 4); use of tryptamine-containing snuffs in the Caribbean and Amazonia (see Chapter 3); divinatory use of ergoline alkaloid-containing morning glory seeds in Mexican shamanic healing (see Chapter 2) and North American shamanic use of the *peyotl* cactus (see Chapter 1). The value of the entheogens to organized religions has been amply demonstrated by the 2000-year survival of the famous Eleusinian Mystery religion of the ancient world (an annual, mass initiation employing an entheogenic potion containing ergoline alkaloids; Wasson *et al.* 1978; see Chapter 2) and modern examples of the "Native American Church" and "The Peyote Way Church of God" employing *peyotl* as a sacrament (La Barre 1938; La Barre 1970; Mount 1987; Stewart 1987) and South American Christian churches incorporating *Daimé* (*ayahuasca*) as a sacrament (Henman 1986; Liwsky *et al.* 1992; Lowy 1987; MacRae 1992; Prance 1970). Perhaps using these historical and modern examples as models will aid us in designing institutions to foster religious experiences in modern human users (Hofmann 1989). There is a place in the modern world both for organized entheogen-based religions and the shamanic model of small-scale cultic or individual use; for group communion and for solitary psychonaut "travels in the universe of the soul" (Gelpke 1981)- not to mention for medicinal use in various treatment modalities.

Donate \$45 and bring poetic drug musings to your fridge

by Jonathan Ott

There have already been some limited modern experiments in relaxing the drug laws, and in general use levels stay about the same or go down. In the 11 American states that briefly "decriminalized" marijuana in the 1970s, the number of users stayed about the same (Johnson *et al.* 1981). In the Netherlands, legal tolerance of *Cannabis* use and its legal control has led to a significant *decline* in consumption: in 1976, 10% of 17-18 year old Dutch citizens used illegal *Cannabis*, whereas by 1985 this percentage has almost been halved, to 6%, according to official Dutch figures (Ministry of Welfare 1985). The Dutch government is succeeding, as it intended, in making *Cannabis* use boring... no rebellion there. American proponents of drug control hem and haw and try to explain away the Dutch success by claiming that the Dutch problem is easier to deal with, owing to the "homogenous population" (Jarvik 1990), which is a polite way of saying that the Dutch aren't burdened with a large, intractable population of black and Hispanic dope fiends! In fact, the Netherlands *does* have a large and growing minority population (over 5%) and there are poor urban districts which resemble U.S. ghettos (Beers 1991).

The Prohibition experiment has failed miserably, and it is high time we were back to the natural order of things, and let society learn how to regulate and control drug use socially and medically, not legally and by force. The introduction of distilled alcohol to European society led to "epidemics" of uncontrolled, excessive use (Wasson 1976b), but in time, without government intervention, Western societies began to make their peace with alcohol (a process which continues evolving), developing rituals to help control alcohol addiction, such as social approval of alcohol use after the day's work, and general condemnation of alcoholic, dependent behavior (Zinberg 1977; Zinberg 1984). Modern societies will not sanction nor approve irresponsible, addictive use of legal heroin, cocaine or marijuana; just as they do not sanction uncontrolled use of alcohol. The legal availability of tobacco and alcoholic beverages does not mean societies encourage their use, and there is evidence that anti-alcohol and anti-tobacco advertising campaigns conducted by the U.S. and other governments are effective in restricting use. Only by bringing all ludicrous drug use into the open can we hope to develop social restraints favoring responsible use of presently illicit drugs. We must treat citizens as responsible adults, not promulgate the absurd and fallacious notion that certain drugs (like heroin and cocaine) destroy individual will and self-control- thereby giving immature and irresponsible individuals a ready-made excuse for illegal or immoral behavior- the idea that one's heroin habit made one rob friends and family, or steal an elderly woman's pocketbook (Escobedo 1989a). We must give people choices based on a free market and unbiased information about the benefits and dangers of all drugs, not unrealistically expect to scare people away from certain drugs with silly propaganda. Treat citizens like irresponsible children and many will behave accordingly. It is time our governments exercised true and appropriate control over presently illicit drugs, by guaranteeing purity and dosages and a fair market price- it is up to society and to us as individuals to do the rest.

In the pages that follow I will discuss in great detail that most exciting, most mysterious class of drugs, the stock in trade of shamans and thaumaturges the world over- the cacti, mushrooms, grasses, trees, shrubs and lianas which we call entheogenic plants, and their contained active principles. Of all the groups of proscribed psychotropic plants, it is the entheogens which have been treated most unfairly, for these are in no way "drugs of abuse." Animals shrink from them rather than become habituated to them, people use them infrequently and mostly treat them with awe and respect for their divine potency. Far from being addicting drugs, they show promise in aiding addicts to overcome their habituation to drugs like alcohol and heroin (Hoffer 1970). The controversial psychotherapeutic research on treating alcoholics with LSD and DPT has been summarized (Grinspoon & Bakalar 1979) and the promising initial results certainly justify further experimentation. The organized religious use of *peyotl* by the "Native American Church" has been recognized by personnel of federal government alcoholism clinics to be of some value in treating alcoholism (Albaugh & Anderson 1974; Osmond 1970), and was said by physician Robert Bergman, Chief of the U.S. Public Health Service on the Navajo reservation, to have a greater success rate than other alcoholism treatments. Bergman also noted the marked safety of *peyotl*, estimating only one bad reaction *per* 70,000 ingestions, calling that rate "probably over-estimated (Bergman 1971). The propensity of the entheogens to work against drug addiction led advocacy of their use to be termed an "anti-drug" position (McKenna 1989a; T.K. McKenna 1992).

Although its legal status is confused by the federal classification of *peyotl* and mescaline as controlled substances, and by the plethora of state laws against both the plant and its entheogenic alkaloid, in general American courts have upheld the constitutional protection of sacramental use of *peyotl* by members of the "Native American Church" (an example is the 1964 California State Supreme Court ruling in the Woody case exonerating three Navajo peyotists). Twenty-three states have in some way exempted *peyotl* from controlled substances laws (Blackmun 1990). In general, anthropologists who have studied the "Native American Church" have supported the right of Indians to use *peyotl* sacramentally on grounds of freedom of religion. For example, W. La Barre, D.P. McAllester, J.S. Slotkin and O.C. Stewart signed a "statement on peyote" to that effect in *Science* magazine (La Barre *et al.* 1951). When in 1937 New Mexico Senator D. Chavez introduced a bill to prohibit interstate transportation of *peyotl*, a number of anthropologists and ethnobotanists, including F. Boas, W. La Barre and R.E. Shultes, submitted letters opposing the bill, which was defeated (Stewart 1987). One must, however, have at least one-fourth Indian blood to join this church, and the church itself does not seek non-Indian members owing to the limited supply of the sacrament (Mount 1987). Nevertheless, a New York Federal District Court found in 1979 that "the use of peyote for sacramental purposes... is not to be restricted solely to the Native American Church," effectively clearing the way for non-Indians to use *peyotl* religiously, and the Arizona "Peyote Way Church of God" was incorporated in Arizona in 1979, and filed a discrimination suit in Texas when Arizona church members were arrested there while harvesting *peyotl*. Drug possession charges against the church members were dismissed (Mount 1987; Ott 1992c). A Caucasian member of the "Native American Church" was recently exonerated of drug charges the New Mexico State Supreme Court, Chief Justice J.G. Burciaga stating his court "compelled to halt this menacing attack on our constitutional freedoms" (Gorman 1992). Similarly, the Canadian government has sanctioned the sacramental use of entheogenic mushrooms by a religious organization called "The Fane of the Psilocybe Mushroom" ("fane" in the sense of "temple," rather than "fairy" or "banner")- actually, the organization was chartered at a time when the psilocybian mushrooms were legal in Canada, owing to a favorable ruling in a court case.

It is interesting that some anthropologists who supported the (non-traditional) use of *peyotl* as a sacrament by North American Indians have denounced use by non-Indians. La Barre, for example, called British *peyotl* or mescaline users from Havelock Ellis to Aldous Huxley "ethnologically spurious, meretricious and foolish posers" and ridiculed Huxley's book on his religious experience with mescaline, *The Doors of Perception*, as a "rather absurd book" (La Barre 1975). I don't know how one can be "ethnologically spurious other than by faking field work *ala* Castaneda, and La Barre is certainly entitled to his opinion, but the man who wrote *The Perennial Philosophy* (Huxley 1944) cannot fairly be called "meretricious"- somebody with a more sincere interest in spiritual matters would be difficult to find. La Barre went on to denounce the "Neo-American Church," which had adopted entheogens as sacraments, as a "wholly synthetic, disingenuous and bogus cult"! This is pure, unalloyed discrimination... racial and religious discrimination. As we will see in the pages that follow, sacramental use of entheogens is as much a part of Caucasian heritage as it is a part of New World Indian heritage. I have just as much right to ingest *peyotl* or entheogenic mushrooms as any Navajo or Mazatec or Huichol Indian- to say otherwise, as La Barre has done, would be to discriminate against me because of my racial background and to deny me the right to worship as I wish or see fit.

It is my sincere wish that this book contribute to an objective reappraisal of entheogenic drugs and their place in the modern world. I have dedicated it to my late teacher Gordon Wasson, who more than anyone catalyzed the contemporary revival of ecstatic, shamanic religion, and who wrote beautifully about the "bemushroomed" state. At the outset I reiterated Wasson's rhetorical question, whether, with all our modern knowledge, we needed the divine entheogens any longer. I would answer with Wasson, that precisely *because of* our modern knowledge *we need them more than ever*. Mother Earth, Our Lady Gaia, is suffering mightily the ecological consequences of all that modern knowledge and especially Judeo-Christian heritage which treats us as a special creation enjoined to subdue and master the Earth. But to paraphrase one of the greatest Americans, Chief Seattle, the Earth does not belong to humankind, humankind belongs to the Earth. Any experience, pharmacological or otherwise, which makes us aware that "every thing that lives is Holy," that we are all sisters and brothers... black, white, two-legged or four-legged, legless or centipedal; that the universe of which we are an integral part is divine and sacred... any such experience can be of vital importance in helping us overcome our ecological plight, which is the inevitable consequence of treating the world as matter, not as divine energy... as objects to be bought and sold, not as "Eternal Delight." I firmly believe that contemporary spiritual use of entheogenic drugs is one of humankind's brightest hopes for overcoming the ecological crisis with which we threaten the biosphere and jeopardize our own survival, for *Homo sapiens* is close to the head of the list of endangered species. We need to recapture the *mysterium tremendum* of the *unio mystica*, the millennial awe our ancestors felt in the divine presence, in the sublime majesty of our marvelous universe, in the entheogenic "bemushroomed" state the sage Gordon Wasson described (1961):

Elsewhere I once wrote that the bemushroomed person is poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen. In truth, he is the five senses disembodied, all of them keyed to the height of sensitivity and awareness, all of them blending into one another most strangely, until the person, utterly passive, becomes a pure receptor, infinitely delicate, of sensations. As your body lies there in its sleeping bag, your soul is free, loses all sense of time, alert as it never was before, living an eternity in a night, seeing infinity in a grain of sand. What you have seen and heard is cut as with a burin in your memory, never to be effaced. At last you know what the ineffable is, and what ecstasy means. Ecstasy!

[[back to library](#)] [[back to books online](#)] [[back to pharmacatheon](#)]

Archived by Erowid without permission

Last Mod - Mar 30 2010

Design © 1995-2010 Erowid.org. Content © respective copyright holders.